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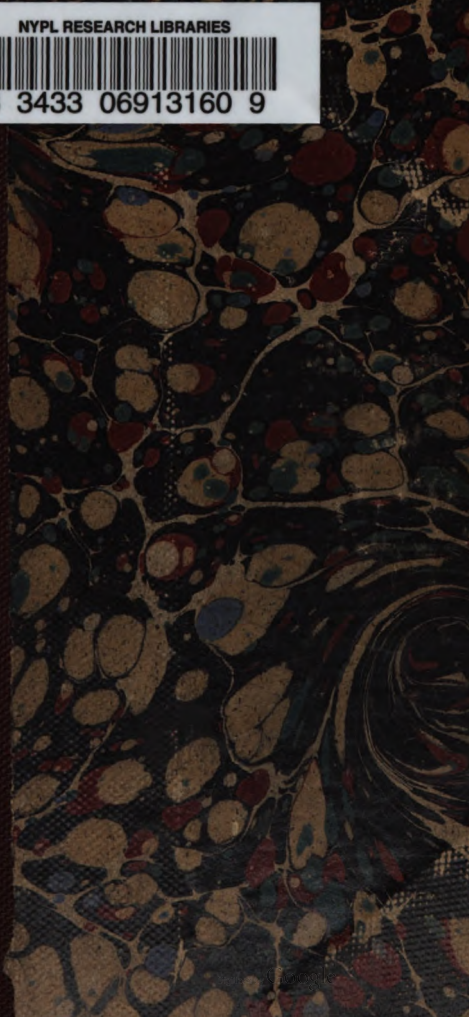
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Lackington

ZTR

THE
CONFESSIONS
OF
James
J. LACKINGTON,
LATE BOOKSELLER,
AT THE TEMPLE OF THE MUSES,
IN A
Series of Letters to a Friend.

But then grew *Reason* dark, that *she* no more
Could the fair forms of Good and Truth discern ;
Bats they became, who Eagles were before,
And this they got by their *desire* to learn.

SIR J. DAVIS.

"The soul's dark cottage batter'd and decay'd
Lets in new light through chinks which time has made."

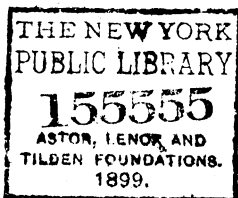
NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY JOHN WILSON AND DANIEL HITT
FOR THE METHODIST CONNECTION.

J. C. TOTTEN, PRINT.

1808.

REPAIR No. 682. 100



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author of this Confession is a man of a very prominent character. Having attained considerable celebrity, as well by his strange rise from one of the lowest stations in life, to the possession of probably the greatest book-store in the known world ; as by the many editions of his life, written principally to throw a general obloquy on Christianity, and to shew his particular aversion from the Methodists.

He followed the occupation of a shoemaker, according to his confession; and by hearing the Methodist preachers, was convinced of his sinfulness, and made a good progress in experimental and practical piety. In consequence of his sobriety and diligence, accompanied with the generous assistance of his Methodist brethren, it appears he emerged from his debased situation, and by a swift gradation, rose to opulence. He now fell from his steadfastness in religion, and became, by degrees, an open deist and a vehement opposer of his former associates and patrons. How he was again graciously visited and reclaimed, these letters will shew ; however, we cannot forbear remarking the providence that should make Mr. Wesley, when dead, the instrument of his re-conversion. He

has now resigned his business, and lives in elegant and useful retirement, enjoying once more the privileges of that church from which he fell, and has lately (in 1804) published the letters from which these are taken, desirous thereby to efface the effects of his former erroneous publications. It has, for the same purpose, been thought expedient to re-publish them here in the present form, altering nothing in what is retained, but omitting what was deemed not closely connected with the subject, and chiefly his large quotations from the poets. The Lord himself give it his blessing, and to him be all the glory.

PREFACE.

SEVERAL of my friends have thought that, if the following letters were made public, they might prove useful as a warning to others not to fall into those errors which had nearly proved fatal to me ; and also, as an alarm to some of those who are already fallen into that dreadful state of infidelity; from which, by the great mercy of God, I am happily escaped.

They were also of opinion, that as I had publicly ridiculed a very large and respectable body of Christians, and thus, in fact, made a **THRUST** at the very **VITALS** of Christianity itself, by this means giving occasion to speculative infidels and practical unbelievers to triumph and blaspheme ; that, therefore, my recantation ought to be made as public as possible, and that by so doing I should give great pleasure to many real Christians, who, with the angels in heaven, will rejoice over a repenting sinner.

To the preceding reasons, the Author is obliged to add, that without publishing something of the kind, he thinks he should not have performed his duty to God or man, nor have had any just ground to expect pardon from either—such is his sense and abhorrence of the pernicious and infidel tendency of those parts

of his memoirs, in which, through the side of Methodism, he attacks the whole of evangelical piety.

In order that my readers might be able to form clear ideas of the state of my mind thro' the whole progress of my present happy change, I thought it best to insert two letters which I wrote while I was an infidel ; and others written during my gradual discovery of the truths which are revealed in the scriptures. And I request my readers to take notice, that the first 22 letters were all written before I was convinced of the truth of those doctrines which are taught by the Methodists, and also by our Reformers, as appears by the Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies of the Church of England.

I have called my old acquaintances by fictitious names, because I would not publicly expose either those that are dead, or such as are still living ; and I presume no one has any reason to complain ; for should any of them be known by my sketches, it can only be by such as were acquainted with the originals.

In one or two instances I have, for particular reasons, made use of a fictitious vehicle to introduce real facts, reasonings, reflections, &c.

It may be necessary to inform my readers, that I am not (as some suppose) again become

a partner in the bookselling trade. It is now five years since I made over the whole of that business to Messrs. George Lackington, Allen and Co. since which time I have had no share or interest in it; and I am very sorry that they last summer published a new edition of the *Memoirs of my Life*; but I believe they had no intention to disoblige the Methodists, but merely published it as a matter of course, to promote their trade. And although I at that time was not pleased with its being re-published, yet I did not see the evil tendency which that work certainly has, in so strong a light as I have since.

I am, Readers,

Your very sincere well-wisher,

J. LACKINGTON.

Alveston, Dec. 10th, 1803.

CONFESSIONS OF J. LACKINGTON.

LETTER I.

“ Trembling I retreat :
My prostrate soul again adores her God.”

SIR,

IN my Memoirs I told you that I married Miss Dorcas Turton. This girl had for some years divided her spare hours between devotion and novel reading; on Sundays she would attend the sermons of two or three of those who are called Calvinist-Methodist preachers, the intervals were often filled up by reading of novels: and after her return from the Tabernacle in the evening the novel was resumed, and perhaps not quit-
ted until she had seen the hero and heroine hap-
pily married, which often kept her out of bed un-
til morning. On other evenings also she would
often hear a sermon at the Tabernacle, and de-
vote the remainder of the night to reading
“ Tales of Love and Maids forsaken.” b

I had no sooner married this young woman than Mr. Wesley's people began to prophesy that I should soon lose all my religion. This prophecy, I must confess, was too soon fulfilled. And although she was not the sole cause of it, yet as I often was prevailed upon to hear her read those gay, frothy narratives, I, by degrees, began to lose my relish for more important subjects ; and it was not long before novels, romances, and poets occupied a considerable part of our time, so that I even neglected my shop ; for being so much delighted with those fairy regions, I could scarce bear the idea of business : I also sometimes neglected the preaching at the Foundery, at other times hurried home, impatient until I had again got into the realms of fiction. Some months passed away in this manner. At last I was roused from those dreams, and again I paid attention to my trade.

I observed in my Memoirs, that Mr. Denis visited me during my long illness. When I was again constantly to be found in my shop, he often called, and having little to do, and being fond of disputation, he would seat himself on the counter, and, as occasion offered, attack me, or any of my customers, on our religious opinions. He was acquainted with the various controversies which have divided the christian world, and appeared to take delight in pulling systems to pieces, without establishing any thing. He owned that he was greatly attached to alchymical and mystical authors ; but he would confess that, although he believed some of their writings were dictated by the Spirit of God, yet that he did not

pretend to understand them. He allowed that the authors of the Old and New Testaments, sometimes wrote as the spirit dictated, but contended that they had written many things, without any such assistance; that, like other pious authors, they at times only wrote their own opinions; so that Mr. Denis only believed so much of the Bible as he approved of. The divinity of Christ, the doctrine of the atonement, &c. he did not believe. From Jane Leed, Madam Bourignon, Madam Guion, he had filled his head with *associating and centering with the divinity, which was the way to be all light, all eye, all spirit, all joy, all rest, all gladness, all love; pure love, rest in quietness, absorbed in silent spiritual pleasure, and inexpressible sweetness, &c.* Mr. D. did not attend any place of worship, except the Horse and Groom public house near Moorfields could be called such. In Moorfields he sometimes would hear part of a sermon or two, and for an hour or two after the orations were ended, he was to be seen disputing among the mechanics, who very often came there for that purpose. In the afternoon on Sunday, he would go to the above public-house, where a room full of persons of this description usually met, and one or other of them would first read a chapter in the Bible, and afterwards animadvert on what he had read, and as many as were disposed to it, added their curious remarks. To this odd groupe of expositors, I was once introduced, but I did not repeat my visit.

From the disputes in my shop, example, &c. I soon came to think that the Sabbath-day was no more sacred than any other day; so that instead

of attending at places of worship, I sometimes read the whole of the day; at other times I walked in the fields with Mr. D. his son, and other disputants, where we debated various subjects.

I believe when any one willingly neglects public worship, he will not long be attentive to private devotion; it was at least the case with me. I also soon began to entertain doubts concerning the doctrines of the Trinity, Atonement, &c. And in proportion as I relaxed in Christian duties, I grew more fond of such disputes as had a tendency to make my mind easy on that score.

About this time Mr. R. T—n—y advised me to read the memoirs of John Bun-
cle, which I soon procured and read through. This pernicious work, (for such I now think it to be) at once, not only eradicated the remains of Methodism, but also nearly the whole of Christianity.

Faults in the life, breed errors in the brain,
And these, reciprocally, those again;
The mind and conduct, mutually imprint,
And stamp their image on each other's mint.

COWPER.

After the heterogeneous example of John Bun-
cle, I indulged myself in the practice of many things which were inconsistent with the character of a Christian. and yet, like him, I was not willing to suppose those practices were at variance with the most exalted notions of rational Christianity.

Having, like John Bun-
cle, given up the doctrines of the Trinity, Original Sin, Atonement made by Christ, the Obligation of the Sabbath, &c.

and having become negligent of Christian duties, and a little relaxed in morals, it was not likely that I should stop here.

I think it was in this year (1776) that I became acquainted with one whom I shall call Jack Jolly, and some of his acquaintance, all downright infidels; but otherwise shrewd, sensible men. Of these I learned the names of such others as had wrote on the side of infidelity; and also the titles of their pernicious productions.

I think it was the witty sarcasms and vile misrepresentations of Voltaire that first made me entirely give up my Bible, from which I had in past years derived so much real comfort in the most distressing circumstances of great poverty, and very great affliction. That precious book enabled me to breakfast, dine and sup on water gruel only; not barely with a contented mind, but also with a cheerful countenance and a merry heart. It was the Bible which supported me under the several years affliction of a beloved wife, in which I truly suffered with her; it was that book which enabled her, although young, to die with joy, and in full and certain hope of a glorious resurrection. When this charming young woman died, I also was given over, my soul was, as it were, hovering on my lips, just ready to depart. In this awful crisis, my amiable wife gone! All around me expecting the moment when time to me should be no longer!

In this awful situation I remained a long time, how long I know not, perhaps a week or weeks; yet even in this state, although more dead than alive, did the divine promises contained in the sa-

cred pages support and comfort me, so that at times I was filled with inexpressible pleasure. In these moments I could believe that I was

“ A glorious partner with the Deity,
 “ In that high attribute, Eternal Life—
 “ I gaz’d, and as I gaz’d, my mounting soul
 “ Caught fire, Eternity, at thee ;
 “ And dropp’d the world.”

Say, ye infidels ! in your thoughtful moments, why would you deprive your poor fellow-mortals of that which alone can support them amidst the complicated miseries to which we are exposed ?

Notwithstanding I had, as I have observed before, been some time relaxing in religious principles and duties, yet no tongue or pen can describe what I felt at times, on relinquishing the volume which contained the words of eternal life ; but it was wrenched from me. For I was so destitute of knowledge and abilities, as not to be able to answer the witty and artful objections of that arch-infidel Voltaire, and others whose works soon after I read. I must confess that I felt it very hard to part from this old constant companion of mine ; and should have been glad to have retained its divine consolations, without being bound to obey all its precepts. But as that could not be, after many struggles, I took my leave of that inestimable treasure of wisdom and knowledge.

I am,

Dear friend,

Yours.

LETTER II.

—————Proud rationals,
 (That deep in speculation's wandering maze,
 Bemuse themselves with error, and confound
 The laws of men, of nature, and of heav'n,)
 Presumptuous in their wisdom—————

Dr. Dodd's Thoughts in Prison.

DEAR FRIEND,

HAVING quite done with the word of God, I soon entirely neglected the public worship of God. Before this, I went at times to one or other of Mr. Wesley's chapels, or to some parish church. But now I was taught to believe, that as the whole world was God's Temple, I could pay my devotions to him at any time and in any place; the consequence you may easily imagine; the divine Being was soon too much out of my thoughts; the Sabbath-day was spent in reading pernicious books, or in writing my catalogues, arranging my books, casting up my profits, visiting, &c. And it was not long before I could make a hand at cards on that day.

As soon as I had gone through Voltaire's pieces, I procured other works of the same tendency, and in reading them I employed most of my spare hours for several years. And although I did not devote so much time to them after this, but read also history, voyages, travels, poetry, novels, &c. yet I often had recourse to them, and took every opportunity of purchasing new publications which had the same pernicious tendency;

and also every old one that I was not before possessed of; so that at last I had got nearly the whole of this species of writing which had been published in the English language. I not only procured them, but read them, and some of them several times over, with a pencil in my hand to put marks to the most particular passages.

I also procured a Bible interleaved with blank paper, and transcribed many of the remarks and objections of infidel writers to various texts; and opposite to some texts I even wrote my own objections. Having had such a long acquaintance with the authors in favour of freethinking, I am able to remark that Thomas Paine, and other modern infidels, instead of consulting the Bible, have copied the objections to it, from those authors that preceded them, which objections have been ably answered, over and over again, by men of deep learning and great ability; those answers I, like other freethinkers, neglected to read, until a few years since. Now I have read them, I am ashamed of having been so easily duped and cheated out of my Christianity.

I will now relate the progress of one of my acquaintance from serious godliness to infidelity. I will call him Dick Thrifty; and I assure you, it is nearly the case with many in the infidel corps. I must first inform you, that most of the freethinkers that I have known in the lower and middle ranks of society, were once influenced by religion, at least in appearance.

Dick Thrifty was near thirty years since, like your old friend, a truly pious man; at least, I am fully persuaded he was perfectly sincere in his re-

ligious profession : he being of an open, honest-hearted disposition, incapable of practising any deceit. About the years 1774 and 1775, he read a good deal of polemical divinity, and by this means lost that simplicity and gentleness of disposition so essential to the Christian character. He then got acquainted with some, who having given up one point of Christian doctrine after another, had, in the end, become downright infidels. These acquaintance advised him to read the works of Chubb, Tyndal, Morgan, Collins, Shaftesbury, Voltaire, Bolingbroke, Hume, &c. Before Dick had read a quarter part of those books, he, like me and others, quitted his religious connexions. For a short time Dick boasted of being a rational Christian, and talked much of Chubb as being a very sensible, clear writer. After Dick had read Tyndal, Collins, Morgan, and Shaftesbury, he was then a Christian deist. Before Dick had gone through Voltaire's deistical pieces, he gave up Christ entirely, and was a philosophical deist; and pitied the poor ignorant Christians for suffering themselves to be kept in the dark. But Dick had not quite finished Bolingbroke's philosophical works before he was, from a dignified philosopher, sunk down to a reasoning brute. He had lost his immortal, immaterial part in the labyrinths of metaphysicks. Voltaire's Ignorant Philosopher made Dick a Sceptic; Helvetius and Hume gave the finishing stroke to the picture; poor Dick was then an atheist!

Duped by fancy, erring reason stray'd
Thro' night's black gloom; and with uncertain step,
Stumbled from rock to rock——

OGILVIE'S PROVIDENCE.

Although Dick did not long remain a downright atheist, yet he long continued in a state of distracting doubt and uncertainty; at one time a deist, then doubting of every thing, even of his own existence. Now, there must be two eternal substances, matter and spirit, and then there can be but one, which must be matter. Sometimes he is quite sure that there is one self-existent being, and that he has an immaterial soul to adore him; then again he is perplexed and distracted with doubts.

Whenever I read the following lines, they affect me much, being applicable to myself, and many others, as well as to Dick.

Poor wretch! he read, and read, and read,
Till his brain turned——
He had unlawful thoughts of many things;
He never lov'd to pray
With holy men, nor in a holy place——
——It is a perilous tale!

WORDSWORTH.

I am,

Dear friend, Yours,

LETTER III.

But when no female arts his mind could move,
She turn'd to furious hate her impious love.

DRYDEN'S VIRGIL.

—Hallow'd is the nuptial bed,
Of deeper sanctity than oaths, and guarded
By justice.

POTTER'S AESCHYLES.

DEAR FRIEND,

HAVING informed you in the last of the extraordinary revolution that took place in Dick's sentiments, you will not be much surprised when I inform you that a great alteration also took place in his life and conduct.

I knew Dick before he made any profession of religion, and thought him an honest well-meaning man, a facetious, sprightly companion; his temper tolerably good upon the whole; if affronted, passionate, but easily pacified; being incapable of bearing any malice to any one. He was grateful for any favours or kindness towards him; open and unsuspecting, and friendly. I believe I may add that he was capable of the highest degree of friendship. His sociable turn of mind at times drew him into convivial parties.

Before he turned Methodist and married, he was addicted to the pleasures of lawless love; but he treated the sex in the kindest manner. After he turned Methodist he lived a strict religious life, and was, I think, as I before observed, perfectly

sincere in what he professed. I now can recollect that he had some enthusiasm, and a spice of fanaticism. Such as were acquainted with him thought that he generally lived a contented and happy life. He bore some misfortunes which befel him with fortitude. In short there was great reason to believe that religion had made a radical change in his heart and life.

Reading much religious controversy, and disputing about doctrines, has hurt many.

They dispute so much and long about it,
That even themselves begin to doubt it.

When Dick's mind was puzzled he was not so strict, nor so universally attentive to preserve the christian temper and manners as he had been; so that when he ventured on the writings of free-thinkers, he was the more easily seduced from the truth and simplicity of the gospel. For some time after Dick had become, in his own conceit, a philosopher; he talked of the eternal rule of right, the fitness of things, of loving virtue merely for its own sake, and a great deal to the same purpose. Indeed at times he would insinuate, that the Christian had not so much reason to dread the commission of sin as a free-thinker had; that infidels of all men ought to be careful how they lived, as they did not believe that there was any intercessor for transgressors; but it was remarked that he grew more relaxed in some moral duties. It is true that to all appearance he remained an honest generous tradesman, and was charitable to real objects of distress; but he would sometimes spend

the major part of the night with free-thinking companions at a tavern. Two or three years after he commenced moral philosopher, he was not able to resist the charms of his servant maid, although he was possessed of an amiable wife, with whom, to all appearance, he lived very happy, and who both loved and esteemed her husband.

—"Lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,
Will satiate itself in a celestial bed,
And prey on garbage."

"But virtue never will be moved,
"Though lewdness court it in the shape of heaven."

In novels we often read of men's planning deeply, and taking incredible pains in order to seduce wives : in real life even the most profligate part of our sex do not commonly attack a fort that appears to be impregnable, nor are they fond of going on a forlorn hope. Those married women who at all times behave themselves as the delicacy of the female character requires, have seldom complaints of this nature to make. Cæsar would not have his wife suspected ; no doubt but he had the same ideas just hinted at. The late pious Bishop Wilson says, in his 55th sermon : "Let but women so behave themselves, as that the men may think them *chaste* ; and they may be confident, nobody will attempt them *but in an honest way*." He adds, "But this is the *real* occasion of so many miscarriages :—people discover, either by their very vain dress, or looks, or words, or behaviour, they discover that they *do not fear God*, that they only *want to be tempted* ; and this encourages

those that are as naught as themselves to tempt, and to gain their wicked ends of them."

Although Dick was not quite so abandoned by honour and conscience as to be capable of violating the ties of friendship; yet I have reason to believe that some of his infidel companions would not have scrupled, for a moment's gratification, to have sacrificed the peace and happiness of their dearest friends.

I have been more particular in describing my friend Dick's infidelity and vice, as in so doing I have, in some particulars, described my own case and that of others.

I am, dear friend,

Your's

LETTER IV.

It seem'd as though his conscience would permit
A momentary pause, for one short gleam
Of hope to visit his benighted soul.

DEAR FRIEND,

I THINK you will be glad to peruse the following letters, as they will help to convince you of my being quite in earnest in renouncing infidel principles and practices. They were wrote to some of my old sceptical companions. The first you will perceive was wrote when I only began to see the effects of infidel principles on the morals of mankind, before I was convinced of the truths of revealed religion. It was sent to Jack Jolly, in March, 1799.

" Dear Jack,

" I am uncertain whether you are dead or alive ; in this world or in a better ; in a worse you cannot be. Could I meet with Mercury when I have finished this, I would transcribe a copy of it and send it by him, directed to Jack Jolly, the philosopher, in the Elysian Fields—inquire among the votaries of Bacchus.

" As far as it regards yourself only, I do not think it of much consequence whether you are still alternately oppressed, and overwhelmed with sickness and pain, or making merry with your jovial companions over a bottle : now moralizing and reasoning on moral and physical evil ; then finding fault with administration ; one while believing in a great first cause, and then asserting that the universe has existed from all eternity. In short, whether you are still going on in the old dull round of a little pleasure and much pain ; or, whether you have quitted this insignificant motley scene, for the chance of losing the happiness and misery of existence, or of existing in a happier state of things. But while I live in hopes of the pleasure of hearing from you, (although but seldom) and of again seeing you by my fire-side, I must confess, that I am so selfish as to wish you may not have had the start of me. I have sent you two letters since I received one from you. If you really are in a state of mortality, and should read this, do assure me of it, and let me know how your excellent wife is, and your children. I am also concerned to know how the philosopher your brother is.

" Tell me also what you now think of French philosophy and philosophers. The world is now

more enigmatical than ever. Plutarch says that superstition is worse than atheism; several other philosophers have repeated it after him, and you and I have believed it; but now I have my doubts about it. On the other hand, I know not how to believe that ignorance and error can promote virtue: I really am much perplexed. One thing seems certain, the breaking down of the old superstitious dykes has brought on us an universal deluge of vice and immorality, the effects of which we must own are alarming in the highest degree.

“ I have observed, that for a year or two past, a shyness has taken place in me towards my free-thinking authors: I have seldom any thing to do with them. Those late great favourites and constant companions of mine are now neglected and covered with dust; for at times I can scarce help thinking them chargeable with some of the dreadful evils that are now inundating Europe.

“ A few years since you and I thought it would be charming to live in a state composed entirely of free thinkers. I now shudder at the very idea. No doubt there are some speculative infidels who, like you, your brother, and myself, would gladly act their part in society by endeavouring to promote the happiness of all their fellow creatures, and even that of the animal world; but we now find that the bulk of mankind are only to be restrained by their hopes and fears.

“ I am now grown more indifferent than ever as to what others do, how they live, &c. or even as to what they think of me, or my way of life. I know that I am thought to be a strange sort of a fellow, as I neither hunt, shoot, drink, or play at cards.

I read until I am tired. I then walk or work in my garden, and in bad weather I cleave wood, &c. Once a week I dine with Mrs. L.'s father, who, although a lawyer, is a very honest, peaceable gentleman. He is also good to his poor neighbours, and goes to church once a week, except I happen to be there on Sunday when the service is in the afternoon, when I keep him awake by relating all the droll adventures that I can recollect. In my turn I patiently listen to his old stories, although I have heard them twenty times before; long may he live in his peaceable and quiet mansion.

I am,

Dear Jack,

Your old friend,

Alveston, March 10th, 1799.

J. L.

I have since learned that Jack Jolly's brother died about this time, and that Jack survived him only about a year, but his health was so impaired as to render him unable to write. What were his dying sentiments I have endeavoured to learn, but without success; I fear they were not what I now could wish them to be, as I wrote to an old infidel relation of his to know what state his mind was in when dying, but I never received any answer. As you will have more particulars relating to Jack, I will now add no more, but that,

I am, dear friend, your's.

LETTER V.*

"For heaven virtue can alone prepare ;
 "Vice would find herself unhappy there."

OLD FRIEND,

I REMEMBER to have read twenty years since, I believe in a translation of one of the Classics, of a man that was suspected of having murdered his father ; but as no positive evidence was advanced against him, it was thought unjust to punish him. In order to be more satisfied in the affair, a person, unknown to him, was ordered to pay close attention to him every time he went to sleep, which was accordingly done ; and on this person's reporting that the suspected man slept perfectly sound, it was concluded that he could not have murdered his father.

I was led to the recollection of the above story by some part of my last letter to you, reflecting on the surprise it possibly might give you on reading of it. I was by a train of reasoning brought to conclude (as I have no faith in a death bed repentance) that if a person cannot sleep soundly who has been guilty of any horrid crime, he certainly cannot die in peace, but will be tormented by his guilty conscience : so that if at that awful period he is in good humour and can laugh, like Ann

* This letter was wrote when I only admitted the truth of natural religion.—The letter alluded to in this is omitted.

Boleyn and others mentioned in my last, I, with the apostle, "*trust that he hath a good conscience.*"

But my dear friend, if because I could wish to die in a perfect good humour, like the emperor Augustus, you think me a mere trifler, and an enemy to serious thoughts, you never was more mistaken, as no man can think more gravely on serious subjects than I do at times, and that frequently ; but then I insist on it, that a time of sickness, when the body is overwhelmed with pain and disorders, is not a suitable time for repentance ; much less should that important work be deferred to a death-bed. Nothing surprises me more than to hear or read that rational beings, or some who would be thought such, talk of making their peace with Heaven on their death-bed.

The greatest offenders against the laws of society, in general shew great contrition when brought to the gallows ; yet no one is so ignorant as to believe that their repentance is of that kind as, were their lives spared, would prevent them from committing other daring offences. How then can we imagine that the heart of a villain who has the good luck to escape the gallows, can be totally changed on his death-bed.

I wish from my soul that our dramatic and novel writers had not given so many deep wounds to morality as, from observation, I have great reason to think they have done by their frequent insinuations of the efficacy of a few days, sometimes a few hours repentance or remorse. Surely, in all such productions, every villain and immoral char-

acter should be "sent to his account with all his imperfections on his head:" for it is scarcely possible for the devil himself to insinuate any ideas more destructive to moral rectitude than the sufficiency of remorse of conscience on a death-bed.

Homer relates the death of Elpenor in a very concise manner; and to Christians it must appear awful :

Full headlong from the roof the sleeper fell,
And snapp'd his spinal joint and wak'd in hell.

POPE'S ODYSSEY:

I have often been puzzled to find out where those authors of plays and novels, (some of whom are very respectable, and deserve the esteem of the community) learned their notions of repentance. They did not learn them from the scriptures, for in them repentance is made to consist of an entire change of heart and life. Natural religion teaches the same doctrine. By the works of the learned we find that the viedam of the Persians, the sacred books of the ancient Bramins, the morals of Confucius, all hold forth the same notions in respect to repentance. The heathen philosophers taught the same doctrine; Plato says, that such men as have *only* committed *venial sins*, must repent all their lives afterwards; and even though they spend the remainder of their lives in repentance, yet that they must of necessity be cast into Tartarus for a time. This great philosopher, in his Commonwealth, and also in his treatise of the Immortality of the Soul, supposes that souls, both good and bad, carry their good or evil

dispositions with them into the other world ; or in other words, that every man carries the seeds of eternal happiness or misery in his own mind : so that if we go into the other world with evil passions unmortified, they will not only be far more violent than now, but our perception of them will be pure and unalloyed by any intermixture of enjoyment.

Dr. Scott, in the three first chapters of his *Christian Life*, has pursued the Platonic doctrine through all its consequences. It is well worth the attention even of a philosopher. Mr. Boyd has given us an excellent summary view of the Platonic doctrine with respect to a future state, at the end of his translation of Dante's *Inferno* : I will give you a few short extracts.

“ The souls of men, whenever they leave the body, doubtless associate with spirits like themselves.”

“ We cannot see how spirits act upon each other, yet there is no doubt but the plagues inflicted by spirits upon spirits are as immediate as those inflicted by body upon body.”

“ What woeful society must that be ? where all trust and confidence is banished, and every one stands upon his guard, tortured with eternal vigilance of surrounding mischiefs ! when all his employment is diabolical fraud. Their society is like the monster Scylla, whom the poet speaks of, whose inferior parts were a company of dogs continually snarling and quarrelling among themselves, and yet inseparable from each other, as being parts of the same substance.”

"As the punishment arises in a great degree from the acquired habit, it must last as long as the existence of the criminal."

In every act of virtue there is an imperfect union of the soul with God, and some degree of the pleasure of heaven. When habit has made the exercise of virtue delightful, we shall find ourselves under the central force of heaven, sweetly drawn along by the powerful magnetism of its joy and pleasure."

From every point of view, I think it is evident that repentance does not consist in a momentary sorrow, but in a change of disposition and life.

I must confess that I cannot help thinking, that heaven would be a strange sort of a place if every rascal, knave, and fool were permitted to go there, who have on their death-bed, experienced remorse of conscience. Such wretches as these have made a hell of this world to all connected with them; and are they to make a hell of heaven also? Can one conceive a worse hell than it would be for a perfectly honest man to live eternally with a rogue, or a virtuous woman with an old bawd?

We laugh when we read of the Indians in the East, firmly believing that if they can but die with a cow's tail in their hand, they are quite sure of going to heaven; but are not our notions to the full as absurd as theirs? Is our death-bed repentance any thing more than a cow's tail in our hand?

"It must be allowed that it is the height of presumption to set bounds to the mercies of God; but may it not give encouragement to vice, to flatter ourselves with the expectation of pardon

for the greatest crimes, on the easy terms of what we call repentance ; which, after all, may be fallacious, or at best imperfect ?

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

LETTER VI.

O ye fallen !

Fallen from the wings of *reason* and of *hope* !

Erect in stature, prone in appetite !

Patrons of pleasure, posting into pain !

Lovers of argument, averse to sense !

Boasters of liberty, fast bound in chains !

—Fall he *must* who learns from death alone

The dreadful secret—that he *lives* forever.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

DEAR FRIEND,

For a year or more after I wrote the last of the two preceding letters, I continued in a state of perplexity which increased upon me. At last I procured some books in defence of divine revelation, and soon after some authors on practical divinity ; but it was with difficulty that I prevailed on myself to avow the alteration that had by that time taken place in my sentiments. I however, at last, wrote the following letter to J. B.

“ Old Acquaintance,

I have no right, nor any inclination to upbraid you ; your past conduct, on reflection, must make

you so truly miserable as to render you an object of commiseration. You know by the trifle which I sent you by Mr. D. that I was in T—n last June, and heard without much surprise that you were come from London, and was then in the poor-house. On this occasion very gloomy ideas took possession of my mind ; so painful were my feelings that I could not call upon you. I believe few people feel more than I do on seeing an old companion reduced by his own misconduct to a state of wretched poverty ; yet painful as those reflections were, I had still more distressing thoughts of your very sad case. I, in imagination, saw you stretched on a wretched bed, groaning under the aches and pains of disease, a ruined constitution, and premature old age ; and, what is still a thousand times worse, I pictured your features distorted, and your countenance made ghastly by the excruciating tortures you suffered in your mind ! Our spirit, or fortitude, may support us in bearing the infirmities of the body, as sickness and pain ; *but a wounded spirit who can bear ?* I have not finished my melancholy picture. What I have to add is still more dreadful ! This poor man, (said I,) so racked and tortured, is perhaps without God in the world ! Horror of horrors ! Of all the most terrifying ideas this is now to me the most frightful ? To be without God in the world !!! Oh, ye French atheists, take away our liberty ; take all that we have ; put us in a dungeon, or on the rack ; but do not by your sophistical arguments endeavour to rob us, poor wretched mortals, of our God !

A soul in converse with her God, is heav'n;
 Feels not the tumults and the shocks of life;
 The whirls of passion, and the strokes of heart
 A Deity believ'd is joy begun:
 A Deity ador'd is joy advanc'd;
 A Deity belov'd is joy matur'd.
 Each branch of piety delight inspires;
 Faith builds a bridge from this world to the next,
 O'er death's dark gulph, and all its horrors hides;
 Praise, the sweet exhalation of our joy,
 That joy exhalts and makes it sweeter still;
 Pray'r ardent opens heaven, and lets down a stream
 Of glory on the consecrated hour
 Of man in Audience with the Deity.
 Who worships the great God that instant joins
 The first in heav'n, and sets his foot on hell.

YOUNG.

The reason of my troubling you with my gloomy thoughts on your present situation, and state of mind is this: I remember between twenty and thirty years since, you was made acquainted with my sceptical state of mind; and although I never approved of your rudely obtruding your opinions in company, or your endeavouring to turn others out of the good old way; yet, as perhaps by my example or remarks, or by lending you books you may have been more or less confirmed in anti-christian opinions, I could not rest satisfied until I had informed you that my mind has undergone a very great change; that I have a thousand times heartily repented, that the pernicious writings of witty infidels should ever have made me even doubt of the truth of the heart-improving, soul-cheering doctrines of Christianity.

I must also inform you that I have seen the dreadful effects of infidelity on others. Some of

my most intimate acquaintance, before they were infected with infidelity were examples of piety and virtue; but, having once turned their backs on the religion of Christ, they soon became slaves to the most degrading vices. Several that you saw at my house when you first came to London, did by their sad way of life, bring on themselves shocking disorders, under which they suffered many years, before they were summoned to give up their accounts. There, profane wit and ribaldry are no more.

Although I have an aversion to fanaticism and enthusiasm, yet I would much rather again listen to the poor ignorant enthusiastic David Burford, whom you must well remember, than to the most shrewd and witty remarks of my old freethinking acquaintance, who used to set the table in a roar. These clever, sensible, witty fellows, with all their subtile reasoning, had not understanding enough to live like rational beings, but by their vicious practices brought on themselves years of pain and misery, and shortened their existence. The good old David Burford's fear of God made him live soberly and righteously; his faith enabled him many years to bear poverty and affliction with cheerfulness, as believing that all would work together for his good—as he would often tell us. His hope of going to a better world enabled him to expect his approaching dissolution with joy.

—deep is the stake,
And awful the inquiry---how the soul
May smile at death, and meet its God in peace.

DODD.

O, old acquaintance, this very poor and very ignorant old man, was in reality much wiser than

we have been, although we used to laugh at and despise him. May we begin to live the life, that at last we may die the death of this poor simple weaver !

Among all your freethinking acquaintance did you ever know one whose reading, learning, or wit enabled him to live so uprightly and comfortably in so much poverty and affliction ; or who could, like him, look death steadily in the face with humble joy. Young says truly,

“ A Christian is the highest stile of man.”

The most learned, the wisest, and best of men were Christians. In reading history and biography we learn, that many of the most intelligent men, after many years spent in voluminous libraries in eager search of science, of knowledge, and wisdom, have, in the end, thrown aside even the most respectable works of ancient and modern philosophers, moralists, historians, politicians, poets, &c. and have in their partly-neglected Bible found a treasure which every where else they had sought for in vain. The brightest geniuses have found ample satisfaction in that book. There is the sublime and the beautiful ; the most pathetic stories, and elegant parables ; the grandest descriptions and the most august ideas of the Deity ; the most perfect morality ; the greatest motives to virtue, and the most awful denunciations against vice. In a word, in that book we are taught the way of holy living ; and by so living we ensure to

ourselves an eternal state of felicity in the realms
of everlasting light and love.

I am,

Old Acquaintance,

Yours, &c.

J. L."

Alveston, Jan. 1, 1803

To this letter I did not receive any answer un-
til June the same year. It is time to conclude this.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

LETTER VII.

When late there is less time to play the *fool*,
Soon our whole *term* for wisdom is expir'd,
(Thou know'st she calls no council in the grave;
And everlasting fool is writ in *fire*,
Or *real* wisdom wafts us to the skies.

YOUNG,

DEAR FRIEND,

BY J. B.'s letter to me in June, it
appears that an alteration has also taken place in
his sentiments. The following letter, which I
sent to him about a month after, will sufficiently
inform you of the contents of his to me.

" Old Acquaintance,

I sincerely rejoice to learn from your letter to
me that God has not finally *given* you over to strong

delusions still to believe a lie, for not obeying the gospel of Christ. I am also happy to learn that you have a better conviction than that which only brings with it a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which is ready to be poured forth on the adversaries of Christ. May God, who is so rich in mercy, establish both you and me in the truth as it is in Christ, and in every good word and work, that we may not be in the number of those that draw back unto perdition, but of those that believe to the saving of the soul.

The life of Christ may well fill you with admiration and devotion. I was, even when an infidel, struck dumb and confounded whenever, for a few moments, I seriously reflected on his wonderful character. We have not only been wicked, but also astonishingly stupid in professing to disbelieve miracles, when at the same time we were obliged to believe the greatest of miracles: That the son of a poor obscure carpenter, brought up in a very ignorant, scandalous village, could *speak as never man spake*, and live among the dregs of mankind like a God!

In his blessed life,
We see the path, and in his death the price,
And in his great ascent, the proof supreme
Of immortality.

DR. YOUNG.

You say that you have but one book of your own, which is the New-Testament. In possessing that you have the best book in the world; a book which angels could not have composed; a book, which the primitive Christians esteemed more than their lives; rather than suffer one of

the Gospels or Epistles to be destroyed they submitted to the most cruel torments, and endured the most lingering, ignominious deaths.

But for this book we should have been in worse than Egyptian darkness: the intellectual world would have been without a sun; we should have blundered in the dark; have stumbled upon error after error, without one cheering and enlightening ray.

“And found no end in wondering mazes lost.”

But in those sacred pages life and immortality is brought to light; a glorious prospect is opened to us beyond the grave, where clouds and darkness are no more.

I am glad you have friends who will lend you plenty of books. Yes, he must be stupid indeed, whom even a little knowledge in astronomy does not fill with devotion.

But even among the stars do not forget your New-Testament; that, by the blessing of God, may make you wise unto salvation: and should that really be the case with you, perhaps you may be employed to all eternity in contemplating infinite wisdom and goodness among those stupendous works of the great *incomprehensible* CREATOR of those innumerable worlds.

Till lost in one immensity of space,
A sense of Deity o'erwhelms your soul.

COURTIER.

If among the books of divinity that you are so kindly offered the use of, you can borrow any of

the following, they will help to establish you in the belief of the truth of Divine Revelation :—Paley's Evidence of Christianity ; Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible, in letters to Thomas Paine ; Bishop Porteus' Compendium of the Evidences of Christianity ; Addison's Evidences of the Christian Religion ; Madame Genlis' Religion the only Basis of Happiness and true Philosophy, in which the Principles of the modern pretended Philosophers are laid open and refuted, 2 vols. Butler's Divine Analogy ; Bentley against Collins ; Bentley's Sermons on the folly of Atheism ; Jenkin's Reasonableness and Certainty of the Christian religion, 2 vols. I have lately read the whole of these works with great satisfaction. If you are fond of real philosophy and astronomy, you will be highly pleased with Bentley's Sermons on the Folly of Atheism. Paley's is an extraordinary good work. Butler's Analogy is a very great work. Jenkin's is the most copious and the best work I ever read in defence of divine revelation. It treats in a clear manner of the necessity of a divine revelation, antiquity of the scriptures, God's dispensations under the Patriarchs, Moses, Judges, Kings, and Christ ; the wisdom and goodness of God is excellently displayed in the manner of the promulgation and preservation of the scriptures ; various difficulties are cleared and objections answered. The author has, through the whole discovered great depth of thought, a thorough knowledge of the history of the four great monarchies mentioned in the Old Testament, and of other ancient nations ; which he has brought forward in confirmation of the truth of divine revelation. In

reading this excellent learned production, I could not help remarking the wonderful difference that there is between this work and the poor superficial works of freethinkers. Had those freethinkers ever read this work, they never would have exposed their own ignorance as they have done ; and had you and I, and others of our acquaintance, been acquainted with it, we never should have been so seduced, perverted and imposed upon by shallow pretenders to sense and learning. Were I still a bookseller, I would immediately work off a very large impression, sell them cheap, and disperse them through every part of the world. The work has gone through various editions. It has been greatly enlarged and improved since it was first published. Before I conclude, I would seriously advise you not to read any controversies on points of doctrine or articles of faith ; what is absolutely necessary to be known is plainly revealed.

*" Not deeply to discern, or much to know,
 " Mankind were born to wonder and adore.*

The more you read the New-Testament the more you will enter into and partake of the spirit of it ; and your love for it will increase in proportion. Read also as much practical divinity as you can : we all stand in need of every aid to keep us in a true Christian disposition, and steady in the profession of Christianity. Dr. Young says,

*At thirty man suspects himself a fool ;
 Knows it at forty and reforms his plan :
 At fifty chides his infamous delay,
 Pushes his prudent purpose to resolve,*

In all the magnanimity of thought
Resolves ; and re-resolves ; then dies the same.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

Neither you nor I considered that we were very great fools until we were more than fifty. The last line has been verified in thousands. God grant that it may not prove true of us also.

I am,

Old Acquaintance,

Your's,

Alveston, July 28, 1805.

J. L."

You see, dear friend, the melancholy effects of infidelity even in this life ; to what poverty, shame, and disgrace have thousands of its votaries been reduced. The conversion of this poor creature should also encourage us to use what abilities we may possess, however small they may be, in order to reclaim others. We should put proper books into their hands, and never be tired or discouraged. Small causes have often produced great effects. I have been just reading of an atheist who was converted by one word. The story is related by Madame de Genlis in her " Religion considered as the only basis of Happiness and of true Philosophy," vol. i. p. 76. I will transcribe the passage :

She says, " Others after having doubted all their lives, change in a moment their sentiments and dispositions. I knew a man of great sense and very high character, whose conversion was brought about by a single word. He was yet in the age of the passions ; he had never possessed

" the least principle of religion ; and he prided
 " himself on being an atheist. One day, in the
 " presence of an ecclesiastic, equally distinguish-
 " ed by his eminent virtues and talents, he affect-
 " ed to brave all decorum, which ought at that in-
 " stant to have constrained him to have held his
 " tongue at least ; and after having given him a de-
 " tail of his sentiments and opinions, he ironically
 " added, that, according to every appearance, he
 " should never be converted. Ah, exclaimed the
 " ecclesiastic, who till then had been silent, if
 " you could but hope !—He said no more, he got
 " up and went out. But these words made a
 " deep impression upon the heart of the atheist :
 " he had no difficulty to comprehend their ener-
 " getic meaning ; he felt himself moved and af-
 " fected ; a croud of new reflections presented
 " themselves to his mind ; he longed to see and
 " converse again with the man who had produced
 " in him so strange a revolution. The next day
 " he even went in search of him ; he opened to
 " him his heart, asked his advice, hearkened to
 " him with attention, with eagerness : and from
 " that moment renounced forever the vain soph-
 " isms of false philosophers. Such is the power
 " of grace, it can produce in a moment the most
 " surprising metamorphoses, and its effects will
 " ever confound the incredulous observer, who
 " shall be acquainted with the human heart."

I am

Dear friend,

Yours,

LETTER VIII.

Ye lov'd associates of unclouded hours,
Whom I remember still, where are ye now?
Ah, whither tost by life's unfriendly waves!
Perhaps on earth we never more may meet.

COURTIER.

DEAR FRIEND,

THE two preceding letters were addressed to Mr. D. and by him conveyed to J. B. in the poor-house in T——n. When I was an apprentice, Mr. D. came to work in the same shop as a journeyman, and two or three years after the death of my master he married my mistress, to whom he made an excellent husband; he buried her two or three years since. While he was a journeyman, I advised him to go and hear the Methodist preachers; he did so; and for more than thirty years has been an upright, friendly religious man.

As Mr. D. is a very old acquaintance of mine, and also of J. B. I requested him to read my first letter to J. B. as he was ill. The reading of it gave him much pleasure, as he found that I had again embraced that religion which I had so long disbelieved; and he wrote a letter to congratulate me on the occasion. I will give you my answer to Mr. D's letter.

“SIR,

“You perhaps may have remarked, that whenever I visit T——n, I also always visit the fields by the side of the river, and other places where, in

my youthful days, I spent many of my leisure hours ; from whence you may infer, that in those old favourite walks I endeavour to recollect the old and pleasing sensations which I felt while I was conversing with my old companions in those charming rural retreats, some of whom are now no more.

“ On this side and on that we see our friends
Drop off like leaves in autumn.”

Others of them have lost every pious and virtuous sentiment : so that I cannot visit those old delightful haunts without finding that my pleasing recollections are tinged with melancholy.

—————Gracious God !

How wonderful a compound, mixture strange,
Incongruous, inconsistent, is frail man.

DR. DODD.

As every field where I used to converse with my old acquaintance affords me delight, I hope you will believe me when I assure you that I find great pleasure in seeing, or even hearing from any one of them who have preserved a good conscience. I was the more pleased with your letter, dated Jan. 17, 1803, as from it I learn (what I had long since forgot,) that it was at my request you first was prevailed upon to hear those men whose discourses first made a religious impression on your mind, and have influenced your conduct ever since. I am not a Methodist ; yet, I must own that, as by their means you have been blessed with grace, courage, and resolution to withstand

the temptation of the devil and a sinful world, and have, as an earnest of heaven, attained that peace of mind which worlds cannot purchase, and nothing but a relapse into sin can destroy; if through them you attained that well grounded hope which hath kept you steady in all the storms of this tempestuous state of things, where, at times, you can extend your prospect to future scenes where all is calm and sunshine, I do not wonder that you should wish to live and die in their connection. I hope I shall ever love and honour such of your community as by their lives and examples shew that they are Christians indeed!

Have you not remarked that those who have remained the most steady, have in general been such as were most free from enthusiasm and fanaticism? I wish those who think that they now stand firm, may take heed lest they fall. Shall I tell you that most of the free-thinkers of my acquaintance were once professors of religion, who had contracted a habit for disputation. It has often happened that men have disputed so long about points of doctrine, that they have forgot the principal part of religion. We read of some of old who held the truth in unrighteousness, who are considered as in the direct road to delusion, and likely soon to believe in lies. Indeed it appears to me, that it is of little consequence what a man believes, if he neglects his duty towards God and man.

I think the following passage, which gave Messrs. Hill and Co. so much offence, and was the first occasion of the controversy between them

and Mr. Fletcher, ought to be printed in letters of gold, and hung up in all your preaching houses.

The passage is in the minutes of the Conference held in August, 1770. Mr. Wesley says, "*Does not talking of a justified or sanctified state tend to mislead men? Almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment? Whereas we are every hour and moment pleasing or displeasing to God according to our works, according to our inward tempers and outward behaviour.*"

But to return, as I had no intention to ramble at this rate; I meant to observe, that although living according to the mild precepts of the gospel is the only way of living happily in this world; yet, we are such poor purblind mortals as to wish to extinguish the sun and walk by a taper; we first grow tired of the necessary restraints which the religion of Christ enforces, and think his gracious precepts hard sayings: in this state of mind, having already lost part of the disposition and temper of Christianity, we grow more remiss in public worship and private devotion, in observing the sabbath, &c. then conscience upbraids and makes us unhappy; and if in this state of mind we happen to read, or hear, any sceptical arguments against revealed religion, doubts and perplexity succeed, and the more a person doubts of the divine authority of the gospel precepts, the more careless will he live; but still conscience will disturb his quiet and perhaps make him quite miserable at times. In this unstable state he may continue for several months or years, till at length to get rid of his uneasy mind, he dips again into books of infidelity, where probably he finds God represented as not

attending to the frailties and follies of mortals; or perhaps he finds virtue and vice represented as qualities capable of arbitrary definitions, revealed religion as mere priestcraft, &c. &c. In such authors, specious arguments are adduced, often good reasoning from wrong propositions, and truth and falsehood are so artfully blended together, that in the end he is prevailed upon to give up his Christianity, and by degrees his conscience is quite laid asleep.

In my next I will give you a further account of my progress in infidelity.

I am,
Sir, your's, &c.

J. L."

Alveston Feb. 8, 1803.

LETTER IX.

In hellish banquets, and obscene delights,
The curst assembly here consume the nights.

E. ROWE.

————— But if there's an hereafter;
And that there is conscience tells every man;
Then must it be an awful thing to die.

BLAIR.

DEAR FRIEND,

I WILL now transcribe my second letter to Mr. D. I know not well how to make it shorter.

"SIR,

"Perhaps for some time the young freethinker does not commit any great sin; at least not what is called such; it is likely he will for a while pride himself on his very decent conduct, and talk of being governed by the religion of nature, philosophical principles, &c. But having given up Christianity, he soon grows tired of his religious acquaintance, as he does not like their endeavours and serious arguments to convince him of his error. Having got rid of his pious acquaintance, he looks out for some of those who, like himself, are become philosophers. With those he at first takes "a philosophical walk," or "cup of tea." As their acquaintance increases they dine at each other's house. When this young free-thinker is thought to be pretty well confirmed in his aversion to Christianity, he is invited to dine or sup with a party of those philosophers at a tavern. The two or three first times he goes home early and in good order. In those convivial parties he hears many stories against parsons, and many witty jests upon religion, under the name of superstition; so that, by degrees, he becomes more hardened, his love for those meetings increases and makes him unwilling to part with those jovial companions. "Sure taking a cheerful glass can be no sin: God, say they, delights to see his creatures happy: let us have another bottle;" which is perhaps accompanied with an obscene or blasphemous song. Another song and another bottle is called for until they are intoxicated. In this state they reel into the street at two or three in the morning, where they are sometimes picked

up by the prostitutes, and enticed into brothels, from whence they carry home to their wives those loathsome diseases which often contaminate the blood of several generations, and for which their own children will perhaps execrate their memory.

In this manner many soon learn to spend most of their nights ; their days are mostly consumed in sleep ; their business is lost ; their fortunes run out, and their constitution totally ruined. Some of them are carried off by sudden deaths ; others linger out a few years in great misery, and then die in a horrid state of doubt and fearful apprehension. And not a few of those philosophers have, by their principles and conduct brought themselves into such an unhappy state of mind as not to be able to endure existence, but have

“ Just reeking from self-slaughter, in a rage,
 “ Rush’d into the presence of their Judge ;
 “ As if they challeng’d him to do his worst.”

Although those imaginary philosophers see their companions drop off one after another, they are so far from taking warning that they do all they can to harden one another, by urging every argument they can think of against the immortality of the soul, a future state, and even against the very being of a God !

I could fill volumes, were I to be particular, in describing the beginning and progress of infidelity among those whom I have known since I first commenced bookseller, as many of them came often to

my shop, and about twenty-two years since I was often in such taverns and meetings as I have referred to above.

Before the French revolution, infidelity had made great havock in England ; but there is great reason to fear that since it has increased an hundred fold : and God only knows where this destructive pestilence will end. It, however, is matter of great consolation to see that several of our Bishops, and other sensible, learned clergymen, and also some able dissenting ministers, have published excellent confutations of the works of infidels. The clergy have also taken other wise and pious measures to stop, as much as possible, the progress of infidelity ; and every man that has any regard for religion or morality, should put a hand to the good work. Those who can afford to do it should purchase such tracts against infidel principles as are published at a low price, and disperse them as much as possible wherever they are likely to do good. That cheap editions of all such works as are favourable to Christianity are not to be met with is much to be regretted. Several of those works might be decently printed, and well afforded, for one quarter their present prices. It is owing to their extravagant dearthness that so few are sold. Had they been published at low prices, tens of thousands more would have been disposed of, by which much good might have been done, while the publishers profits would, in the end, be greater, in consequence of the increased sale of the books.]

It would also be a great help to the cause of religion if the wealthy part of the community were to dis-

perse cheap tracts on practical divinity, together with cheap bibles, and testaments. I have remarked, that many persons who would not be at the expence or trouble of purchasing books, will either read themselves or make their children read to them, when books are put into their hands.

It is natural to add, that those who can do nothing else for the cause of God, should shew, by their good examples, the influence of religion upon their life and conversation : this has often produced great effects upon scoffers. On the other hand, when infidels see that such as call themselves Christians can neglect the public worship of God, break the sabbath, be covetous or prodigal, proud and overbearing, or mean and undermining, drunkards or gluttons, defrauders and cheats, backbiters and slanderers, swearers, liars, &c. they are ready to conclude that such persons do not believe in a day of judgment, when every one shall be dealt with according to the deeds done in the body.

The late pious Bishop Horne, in one of his sermons says, " some men considered as Christians, engaged in the concerns of a better world; and a view of their conduct, is really sufficient to make a thinking unbeliever conclude, that nine parts in ten of them either believe no more than himself, or that a statute of lunacy should be forthwith taken out against them."

I know that freethinkers will divert and harden one another with accounts of the bad practices of such as pretend to believe in Christ : so that such as call themselves Christians, and at the same time live in the open breach of God's laws, are strength-

ening the cause of infidelity. Those, (saith Christ,) who are not with me are against me.

I am,

Sir,

Your's,

Alveston, Feb. 16, 1803.

J. L."

I will defer the remainder of what I wrote to Mr. D. until my next.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's

LETTER X.

Wildly-wavering rolls the dubious mind
From thought to thought, uncertain where its search
Should end.—

Convinc'd by truth, the enlightened mind no more
Suspends its full assent.

OGILVIE'S PROVIDENCE.

DEAR FRIEND,

I WILL now give you my last letter to Mr. D.

"Sir,

Yes, Sir, by the great mercy of God I am, (as you say,) returned to the study of my Bible. You may well be affected with my wonderful escape from such a dreadful precipice, on the crumbling brink of which I long slept. For these last two

three years I have not even loved the sight of that part of my private library where the books stand which seduced me from the simplicity of the gospel. They have been to me *Will o' the Wisp*; and I have followed them through bog and quagmire, briars, and thorns, until my poor benighted and bewildered mind was lost in such a labyrinth, that it was next to impossible for me ever to find my way out. As I suppose you will be glad to know how so great a deliverance was effected, I will give you a short account of it.

Notwithstanding the bad lives of some infidels of my acquaintance, as I continued to retain a regard to decency, honour and honesty, myself; and as a few freethinkers are studious, and, to appearance, moral characters, professing to believe in natural religion, while, on the other hand, I have remarked that some were guilty of gross enormities, who yet professed to believe the bible to be the word of God; I, for a long time, thought that infidels were as likely to be governed by virtuous principles as Christians were; the vicious lives of some pretenders to Christianity in some measure tended to confirm me in this erroneous conclusion. I was still more confirmed in this opinion by the plausible reasoning in some infidel writers, who, as you know, talk much about moral rectitude, the eternal rule of right, moral obligation, moral sense, &c. &c. Lord Shaftesbury goes very far on this head. He asserts that vice as much disorders the mind as disease does the body; which, no doubt, is true. He is also right in asserting, that virtue is moral beauty, and vice moral deformity. But his Lord-

ship goes much farther ; he, like an ancient sect of heretics, and many modern mystics, says a great deal about loving God and virtue purely for their own sakes, without any regard to future rewards and punishments ; that to do good actions in hopes of being rewarded is mercenary ; - and that persons influenced by such motives are endeavouring to overreach the Deity, by purchasing eternal happiness with a short life of virtue. He intimates that the old saints, who had respect to the recompence of reward, were cunning people, and only good from the fear of hell and the hope of heaven. How much is this like the Devil's objection ? Job does not serve God for nought. In another place his Lordship asserts that there is no more rectitude, piety, or sanity in a creature thus reformed, than there is meekness or gentleness in a tyger strongly chained, or innocence and sobriety in a monkey under the discipline of the whip.

If the rewards proposed to christians had been like those promised by Mahomet to his followers, sensual and voluptuous ; his Lordship would have had some reason to object to their being proposed as incentives to virtue ; but the idea given us in the New Testament of the happiness in a future state is noble and sublime. It is represented as
 “ a state of consummate holiness, goodness, and
 “ purity, where we shall arrive to the true perfec-
 “ tion of our natures ; a state into which *nothing*
 “ *shall enter that defileth* ; where the spirits
 “ of the just are *made perfect*, and even their bo-
 “ dies shall be refined to a wonderful degree ;
 “ where they shall be associated to the glorious

“ general assembly of holy and happy souls; and
 “ to the most excellent part of God’s creation,
 “ with whom they shall cultivate an eternal friend-
 “ ship and harmony; and, which is chiefly to be
 “ considered, when they shall be admitted to the
 “ immediate presence of the Deity, and shall be
 “ transformed as far as they are capable of it, into
 “ the divine likeness. Such is the happiness the
 “ gospel setteth before us, and which furnisheth
 “ a motive fitted to work upon the worthiest
 “ minds. And the being animated with the hopes
 “ of such a reward hath nothing mean or mercen-
 “ ary in it, but rather is an argument of a great
 “ and noble soul.”

As to the fear of punishment, his Lordship, al-
 though inconsistently with what he in other places
 asserts, (in vol. ii. page 273 of his *Characteristics*,)
 says, that although fear is allowed to be ever so
 low or base; “ yet, *religion being a discipline*, and
 “ progress of the soul towards perfection, the mo-
 “ tive of the reward and punishment is primary,
 “ and of the highest moment with us; till being
 “ capable of more sublime instructions, we are let
 “ from this servile state, to the glorious service of
 “ affection and love.”

It may be also remarked, that after a wicked
 man has been roused by the terrors of the Lord, if
 he continue to obey the good motions of the Spi-
 rit, God then *gives him a clean heart, and renews a
 right spirit within him*. He then begins to love
 God, and fears to offend him, fears to be separated
 from him and his people for ever. The fear of

hell is scarcely remembered by a real Christian, but having taken *God for his portion*, for his supreme happiness, he *loves God because God first loved him*, and his greatest fear is lest he should do any thing to displease him. He can heartily and truly say to God,

————— Thou art my all !

My strength in age ! my rise in low estate !

My soul's ambition, pleasure, wealth ! --- My world

My light in darkness ! and my life in death !

My boast through time, bliss through eternity.

But to return. Although I imbibed his Lordship's refined notions of virtue, and for many years, at times, talked much in his Lordship's strain, I found those notions insufficient to preserve me from falling into some vicious courses. Nothing but the belief of the gospel could induce me entirely to renounce the vices and follies of the world, and to *live godly, righteously and soberly* in so ungodly and dissipated an age. The motives held out by other systems are insufficient to restrain the passions and evil propensities of man.

Yet was I so attached to infidelity, and so blinded by it as not to believe its evil tendency, until for some time I had observed how much the morals of men, in every rank and station, had suffered, in a great part of Europe ; and that every kind of vice was gaining ground in proportion as infidel books and principles were disseminated. I then began to see that religion must before have

had great influence on the morals of mankind, and in that point of view must be very valuable in society; and this brought on more serious reflections.

I have for many years taken in several of the Reviews of new publications, which are published monthly, and I now began to read some of the extracts which the Reviewers make from sermons and other books in divinity. In those extracts I frequently found weighty arguments in favour of christianity. About a year past in this way, during which time I was rather in a careless suspense, and yet I was more attentive to my words and actions; and by degrees I began to relish divine subjects, and found that they elevated the mind and filled the soul with sublime ideas. I now began to read a little in the Bible, and took some pleasure in it; and I became more and more serious and thoughtful. I had nearly finished a second volume of my life, which I intended soon to publish. I now read it over again, and cropped out and put in again and again, as I thought that I had treated serious subjects with too much levity; but after all the alterations I was not satisfied that in writing against fanaticism and enthusiasm, I had not said what might hurt some weak christians, or what might be by freethinkers brought against christianity. I was now also afraid, lest by ridiculing and laughing at enthusiasm and fanaticism, I should not only laugh some out of their enthusiasm, but of their religion also. For these, and other reasons of the same nature, I thought it best not to publish it, by which I have

disappointed some of my laughter-loving acquaintance.

As soon as I had acquired a relish for religious subjects, I wished to promote it in others, and therefore began with Mrs. Lackington. Mrs. L. is in her moral conduct one of the most perfect beings I ever saw.

Her reason for being so was, "because she always thought she ought to be as good as she could." She, like some other ladies, had studied well, and very well understood the art of dressing elegantly, but had not the least knowledge of religion beyond that of being as good as she could; and by the bye it were to be wished that all ladies even knew as much as that. As to going to church, or private devotion, she could not see of what use it could be to her. As she wanted for nothing, she did not know what she should pray for; she had never done any person any harm; she had never slandered, backbitten, or ridiculed any person, nor did she know that she had committed any other sin, and so she had no need of praying for pardon.

In this state of affairs I sent to my late partners for Secker's Lectures on the Catechism, Gilpin's Lectures on the same, Wilson's Sermons, 4 vols. and Gilpin's Sermons. These are very plain discourses, easy to be understood, and calculated to leave a very lasting impression on the mind. These excellent sermons Mrs. L. and I read together, and while they convinced her, that being "as good as she could," was perfectly right, and of the utmost importance; yet that there was

something more in religion. They also made me more in love with christianity. I also sent for Bishop Watson's *Apology for the Bible, &c.* in *Letters to T. Paine*; Bishop Porteus's *Compendium of the Evidences of Christianity*, Butler's *Divine Analogy*, Paley's *Evidences of Christianity*, Pilgrim's *Good Intent*, Pascal's *Thoughts*, Addison's *Evidences of Christianity*, Conibear on *Revealed Religion*, Madame de Genlis's *Religion the only Basis of Happiness and sound Philosophy*, with *Observations on pretended modern Philosophers*, 2 vols. Jenkin's *Reasonableness and Certainty of Christianity*, and several others of the same tendency. Those excellent defences of revealed religion I read through, during which I had many struggles; in the beginning I sometimes cried out in the words of Thomas, "Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief:" before I had read out those defences, I was not only almost, but altogether persuaded to be a christian. And I hope that I shall always endeavour to live as becometh the gospel of Christ; and, at times, I feel an humble confidence that God has, or will, pardon all my past sins for the sake of Christ, and by his grace enable me to persevere in well doing to the end of this transitory life, and then admit me into that state where the wonders of his grace, and the mysteries of his providence shall be more clearly understood.

I meant to inform you, that besides those books already mentioned, I sent for Bishop Horne's *Sermons*, 4 vols. Carr's *Sermons*, Blair's *Sermons*, 5 vols, Scott's *Christian Life*, 5 vols. sever-

ral learned and sensible expositions of the Bible ; Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible, with the Fragments ; Josephus's Works, Prideaux's Connections, 4 vols. Mrs. H. More's Works, and various other excellent Works. For some time one sermon was read on every Sunday, but soon Mrs. L. began to like them, and then two or three were read in the course of the week ; at last one at least was read every day, and very often part of some other book in divinity, as Mrs. L. said that she preferred such kind of reading far beyond the reading of novels. So that for some time we have read more books on divinity than on any other subject ; and now Mrs. L. sees very important reasons for going to church, sacrament, &c.

I am, Sir,

Your's, &c.

Alveston, Feb. 20th, 1803.

J. L."

I have now given the whole of what I wrote to Mr. D. and will add no more, but that

I am,

Dear friend,

Your's.

LETTER XI.

~~—Brief time~~

Advances quick in tread; few hours and dark

Remain; those hours in frivolous employ

Waste not impertinent; they ne'er return!

Nor deem it dullness to stand still and pause

When dread Eternity hath claims so high.

DR. DODD.

DEAR FRIEND,

THE following letters were sent to Tom Thoughtless, an infidel, whose vices brought ruin on himself, and also on his family.

“ Sir,

After so many years, you will perhaps be surprised to see my bad hand-writing again.—A short time since, I found among my books a thin folio MSS. in turning it over, I found copies of letters which passed between you and me in the years 1777 and 1778: I read them over with much concern, as I found in some of mine to you I had endeavoured to weaken your belief in the divine authority of the Scriptures, and some of the blessed doctrines which they contain. My knowledge is very circumscribed now, but at that time it was much more so, as I was but very little acquainted with men, and less with books, so that it is not surprising that I should not be able to detect the sophistical arguments, and other vile arts of Chubb, Tyndal, Morgan, Collins, Shaftesbury, Voltaire, &c. Nor was it possible that I should be able to detect the misrepresentations

and wrong translations of many texts of scripture, and of passages from Greek and Latin authors, that are to be found in their works. The next twenty years I procured nearly every book in the English language that favoured the cause of infidelity, and employed much of my spare time in reading them, without reading the many able confutations that had been published to expose their folly and wickedness; and as I scarcely ever attended any place of divine worship, it was scarcely possible for me, under these circumstances, to return to the path of truth. My return was also rendered more difficult by my conduct in life, for I fell into some of the vices and follies of the age, and vice never fails to drive us further from truth and God.—If one who indulges himself in sinful practices should, like Pilate, ask What is truth? he does not wait for an answer, but dissolves the court of Conscience.

During those years I was also, as you know, taken up with the concerns of a very large business; and I am sorry to add, the great profits that I derived from that business, rather tended to drive from my thoughts those important concerns with which they should, more or less, always be occupied. But I am able to say, though although I got money very fast, particularly during the two last years that I was in business, and lived in an expensive style; yet I never so lost my reason as to suppose that riches, or a va parade, could ever make me happy. My leisure hours were mostly spent in retirement at my country-house. There I read those publications

that have been sent into the world by infidels. I also there read poetry, plays, novels, voyages, travels, history, &c. &c.

As I was not infatuated by the love of riches, or grandeur, it was with pleasure I first took partners into my very profitable trade, on very easy terms to them, and soon after that disposed of the whole concern. It is now near eight years since I first retired to this place, nor have I been in London since. I retained a share of my business for about two years and an half after I came here, and then made over the whole to my cousin, Mr. George Lockington, and those gentlemen who were my partners before.

In this retreat, I pursued the same course of reading, until I was roused from my careless state of mind, by observing the dreadful effects which had succeeded the spreading of infidelity. The more I reflected, the more was I filled with horror at the moral depravity that I saw increasing among all ranks. From those reflections I was soon led to conclude, that the works which had produced such baleful effects, must be fatally wrong. By degrees I laid my freethinking books aside, and began once more to study my Bible. To assist me in that study I sent for several learned, sensible commentaries on the scriptures, and also for many other books in divinity, including the best answers that had been made to writers on the side of infidelity; so that I am now convinced of their sophistry, misrepresentations, unfair quotations, and other vile arts with which their works abound.

I had also again recourse to Young's Night Thoughts. The 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Nights, are replete with strong arguments against infidelity, so that I can scarcely think it possible for the most confirmed infidel, who is capable of understanding the force of the arguments, and will read them with proper attention, to help being convinced of the truth of christianity. But it is a melancholy truth, that vice greatly tends to stupify the mind, and often makes us blind to divine truths; the late pious Bishop Horne says, "Midnight overwhelmeth not the earth with a grosser darkness, than that which is superinduced upon the heart of man, when it departs from God, and is turned away from its Maker. He that followeth not Christ walketh in darkness, because the light of life shineth no longer upon his tabernacle."

I have for some years been acquainted with the history of Greece, and with the various opinions of the Grecian philosophers, yet the new and pleasing form in which it is dressed up in Barthelemy's Travels of Anacharsis, induced me to read it again lately, and by reading it I was confirmed in the belief of the truths contained in the gospel. The truly great and good men of Greece, hundreds of years before Christ came, discovered that man had departed from his original state of purity; that happiness in this life was only to be attained by a virtuous conduct: they also taught the immortality of the soul, a future judgment, and that the vicious should be punished, and the virtuous rewarded in another world.

The shallow superficial pretended philosophers of our day, affect to disbelieve the Christian doctrines. Many of the philosophers, and other great men of Greece and Rome, who lived in the time of the apostles and their immediate successors, who had every opportunity of inquiring into the truth of what they asserted concerning Christ, his miracles, death, resurrection, ascension, his sending down the Holy Spirit, miraculous gifts, &c. : Those philosophers, statesmen, courtiers, &c. were so thoroughly convinced of the truth of what the apostles and followers of Christ asserted, and of the doctrines they taught, that they openly professed themselves to be christians, although they well knew that by so doing they should be deprived of their riches, pomp and grandeur; they gladly embraced a life of poverty, ignominy and suffering; and at last shed their blood in the glorious cause.

The scorching fire, the racking wheel,
The scourging rod, and bloody steel;
Each ruthless instrument of pain
That tyranny could e'er devise,
Or hellish foes inflict, were vain,
To shake the courage of the skies!
These hopes no earthly terrors could subdue;
Consummate happiness appear'd in view.

COURTIER.

Our freethinkers reject the miracles wrought by Christ and his followers, and yet they would have us believe far greater miracles; as they would persuade us, that a poor carpenter's son, without books, or even a place to lay his head;

yet that this poor houseless man, and a few plain fishermen, were able, of themselves, to lay down the most perfect system of morality that ever was taught by mortals, and by so doing, exceed all the most learned, the wisest and best lawgivers, and philosophers that ever the world hath produced : and that those fishermen should give up all their former prejudices and religious notions, should quit all their friends and acquaintance, and embrace a life of poverty, endure unspeakable hardships, submit to the greatest sufferings, imprisonments, and the most painful deaths. And all this to propagate (according to infidels) what they must know to be a falsehood.

So that infidels who charge Christians with being credulous, are far more so themselves, they being in reality the most credulous beings in the world. Moreover, infidels know that not a particle of divisible matter can perish, yet would they have us believe that the soul, which is spiritual, immaterial, indivisible, and immortal, can be annihilated.

There is yet a greater absurdity which they would have us believe, viz. that millions of effects have taken place without a cause, or that second causes may, and actually do exist without a first.

Now, when you learn that I read and seriously reflect as above, I presume you will not be much surprised that I should again return like the poor prodigal, and acknowledge that I have sinned against heaven.

I must also inform you, that I have seen the most dreadful effects of infidelity, not only amongst mankind in general, but also amongst my ac-

quintance; some, who before they commenced freethinkers, were upright, honest, industrious men, and as such were prosperous in their various lines of business; on turning freethinkers became knaves and cheats, debauchees, &c. Several of these you well know; their vile conduct is also well known to you, nor are you ignorant of the ruin that they brought on themselves and families. I think you also knew A. B. and his brother; they, it is true, retained their honest principles; but they learned very bad habits, took to drinking and debauchery, which brought on A. B. dreadful disorders; he lived some years in a miserable state, and died about three years since. His brother died a year before him. You also know that D. C. turned free-thinker near thirty years since, shut up his shop, left his wife and children to the parish, or to the wide world, sunk down among the dregs of society in London, and about twenty years since was turned out of the Lock Hospital incurable; when I was in T—n last June, he was in the poor-house in a miserable state of body, and, no doubt, of mind also. J. D. whom, with other jovial companions, perhaps you, when you was in London, saw, died soon after that time. T. A. ran off, and left five poor servant girls with child by him. I have never since heard of him. I have not time to give you account of others.

What horrid effects the principles of freethinkers have had on yourself, your wife, and brother, I leave you to reflect on; I must just remark, that you and your brother might now have been genteel tradesmen, your wife might have been still

alive and happy, and each of your families brought up in the principles of religion and virtue.

It is well known, that thousands by becoming unbelievers have forsaken their religious and moral habits, and become depraved and miserable in both body and mind. Many have been reduced to such an extremely wretched state as not to be able to bear the miseries which they had brought on themselves, and so have cut short that life which was become a pest to society, and an intolerable burden to themselves. Others have taken leave of this world under the gallows, and some are in the road to it. I am, Sir, sorry that your conduct has for many years prevented me from subscribing myself,

Your friend,

Atveston, Feb. 25, 1803.

J. L.ⁿ

Although I have transcribed so long a letter yet I must inform you, that soon after R. W. became a free-thinker, his wife became not only a free-thinker, but a *free-actor*. They lived at some rate together for many years; at last a separation took place, but she proving with child while separated from her husband, to hide her disgrace took something to cause an abortion, which destroyed her own life.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

LETTER XII.

The Libertine his folly shall lament,
His blind extravagance that made him sell
Unfading bliss, and everlasting crowns,
Immortal transports, and celestial feasts,
For the short pleasure of a sordid sin;
For one fleet moment's despicable joy.
Too late, all lost, forever lost,
Gives to his soul perpetual wounds.

E. ROWE.

Oh, Conscience, into what abyss of fears
And horrors hast thou driven me; out of which
I find no way, from deep to deeper plung'd

MILTON.

DEAR FRIEND,

I WILL now transcribe a copy of my second
letter to Tom Thoughtless.

SIR,

I know not of any sight so shocking as that of
a poor self-condemned infidel on a sick bed. While
he suffers the most acute bodily pain, he has no
cordial to cheer his drooping spirits. No! his
mind labours under the most gloomy apprehen-
sions! Those joyous companions with whom he
used to dissipate his time and substance; are so
far from giving him any comfort, that the sight of
any of them adds to his misery; he is ready to
curse them in the bitterness of his soul, for hav-
ing been instrumental in perverting him. The
weaker his body grows, the more strong does he
find that reasoning faculty within him, and which
he fancied would die with the body. How gladly

would he exchange states with his dog that ticks his burning hand, which in anguish he throws over the side of his bed. When in health he degraded himself to a brute, and now he envies the beast, and looks upon him as a superior being. Annihilation, at which one's soul shudders, and which nature abhors, would now be a happy relief; But he is too late convinced that his soul can never cease to exist. Young says,

Men may live fools, but fools they cannot die.

While in health, and high spirits, with his sceptical companions about him, he could laugh at religion, and at hell, and even pass his jokes on the awful Majesty of heaven and earth; and call his existence in question: could represent Christ as a fanatic, a lunatic, or as a downright impostor. This shocking delusion is now over, he now finds that the eyes and hand of God are upon him, and that he must soon be dragged to his awful tribunal: Now he would give worlds to have an interest in that divine Intercessor, whom he has so often laughed at and despised; black despair now seizes his mind, not a ray of hope can pierce through the gloomy horrors of his soul; pray he cannot, nor has he a wish so to do: his hell is already begun, and he dreads a worse to come; at last he expires in tortures not to be described.

In that dread moment, how the frantic soul
Raves round the walls of her clay tenement,
Runs to each avenue and shrieks for help;
But shrieks in vain!—How wishfully she looks

On all she's leaving, now no longer left's !
 A little longer, yet a little longer,
 Oh might she stay to wash away her stains
 And fit her for her passage !---Mournful sight !
 Her very eyes weep blood ;---and every groan
 She heaves is big with horror.---But the foe,
 Like a staunch murd'rer steady to his purpose,
 Pursues her close through every lane of life,
 Nor misses once the track, but presses on :
 'Till forc'd at last to the tremendous verge,
 At once she sinks to everlasting ruin !

I did not intend to quote so much, yet I cannot help transcribing the following narration from Dr. Young's *Centaur not Fabulous*.

"I am about to represent to you the last hours of a person of high birth and great parts.

"The *death-bed* of a profligate is next in horror to that abyss to which it leads. And he that has seen it, has more than *faith* to confirm him in his creed. I see it now, For who can forget it ? Are there no flames and furies ? You know not then what a guilty heart can feel. How dismal it is ! The two great enemies of soul and body, *Sickness* and *Sin* sink and confound his friend ; silence and darken the shocking scene. Sickness excludes the light of heaven ; and sin its blessed hope. Oh ! *double darkness* !

' See, how he lies, a sad deserted outcast, on a narrow isthmus, between time and eternity ! For he is scarce alive. Lashed and overwhelm'd on one side, by the sense of sin ; on the other, by the dread of punishment ! Beyond the reach of human help, and in despair of divine !

'The ghost of his murdered time, (for now more is left) all stained with folly, and gashe with vice, haunts his distracted thought. *Conscience*, which long had slept awakes. Its last soft whispers are *thunder* in his ears; and a means of grace rejected, exploded, ridiculed, the bolt that strikes him dead. He lies a wretched wreck of man on the shore of eternity, and the next breath he draws blows him off into ruin.

'The greatest profligate is, at least, a momentary saint, at such a sight; for this is a sight that plucks off the mask of folly, strips her of her disguise, which glitters in the false lights of the world's mummery, and makes her appear to be folly, to the greatest fool.

'Is not the death-bed of a profligate the most natural and powerful antidote for the poison of his example? Heals not the bruised scorpion the wound it gave? Intends not Heaven, that struck with the terrors of such an exit, we should provide comfort for our own? Would not he, who departs obdurate from it, continue adamant though one rose from the dead? For such a scene partly draws aside the curtain that divides time and futurity: and in some measure gives us a sight that *tremendous*, of which we only had the feeble report before.

'An agonizing profligate, though *silent*, outpreaches the most celebrated that the pulpit ever knew: but if he *speaks*, his word might instruct the best instructors of mankind.—Mixt in the warm converse of life, we think with men; on death-bed with God,

The sad evening before the death of that noble youth, whose last hours suggested these thoughts, I was with him. No one was there, but his physician, and an intimate whom he loved, and whom he had ruined. At my coming in he said, You and the physician are come too late—I have neither life nor hope. You both aim at miracles—you would raise the dead.'

'I said, Heaven was merciful.—(He replied,)

'Or I could not have been thus guilty. What has it not done to *bless* and to *save me*? I have been too strong for Omnipotence! I have plucked down ruin.'

'I said the Blessed Redeemer.—(On which he said,)

'Hold! Hold! You wound me!—That is the rock on which I split—I denied his name.'

'Refusing to hear any thing from me, or take any thing from the physician, he lay silent, as far as sudden darts of pain would permit, till the clock struck. Then he with vehemence cried out,

'Oh, Time! Time! It is fit thou shouldest thus strike thy murderer to the heart. How art thou fled for ever!—A month! Oh, for a single week! I ask not for years; though an age were too little for the much I have to do.'

'On my saying, We could not do too much: that Heaven was a blessed place!—(He said)

'So much the worse. 'Tis lost! Heaven is to me the severest part of hell.'

'Soon after, I proposed prayer. (On which he said

‘Pray you that can. I never prayed.—Nor need I. Is not heaven on my side already! It closes with my conscience. It’s severest strokes but second my own.’

‘His friend being much touched, even to tears, at this (who could forbear? I could not,) with a most affectionate look, he said

‘Keep those tears for thyself. I have undone thee.—Dost weep for me? That’s cruel. What can pain me more?’

‘Here his friend, too much affected, would have left him. But he said, “No, stay. *Thou* still mayest *hope*.—Therefore hear me. How madly I have talked? How madly thou hast listened and believed? But look on my present state, as a full answer to thee and myself. This body is all weakness and pain; but my soul, as if stung up by torment to greater strength and spirit, is full powerful to reason; full mighty to suffer. And that which thus triumphs within the jaws of mortality, is doubtless *immortal*.—And as for a *Deity*, nothing less than an *Almighty* could inflict what I feel.’

‘I was about to speak, when he very passionately said.

‘No, no! let me speak on. I have not long to speak.—My much injured friend! my soul, as my body, lies in ruins; in scattered fragments of broken thought; remorse for the past throws my thought on the future. Worse dread of the future, strikes it back on the past. I turn, and turn, and find no ray. Didst thou feel half the mountain that is on me, thou wouldst struggle with the martyr for his stake; and bless heaven

for the flames :—that is not an everlasting flame—that is not an unquenchable fire.'

'How were we struck ! Yet soon after, still more ! With what an eye of distraction, with what a face of despair, he cried out,

'My principles have poisoned my friend ; my extravagance has beggared my boy : my unkindness has murdered my wife ! And is there another hell ? O thou blasphemed, yet most indulgent, Lord God ! Hell itself is a refuge, if it hides me from thy frown.'

'Soon after his understanding failed. His terrified imagination uttered horrors not to be repeated, or ever forgot. And ere the sun arose, the gay, young, noble, ingenious, accomplished, and most wretched Altamont expired.'

Man, foolish man ! no more thy soul deceive !
To die is but the surest way to live. BROOME.

I believe we should have many such dreadful examples on record, were clergymen called to visit the death-bed of infidels, as in this case ; but few infidels will consent for that to be done ; for although they may see that they have been fatally misled ; yet a state of desperation will prevent them from calling on God themselves, or requesting any one to do it for them : But to return to myself. I must inform you, that it was not by merely reading of defences of Christianity, &c. that I was enabled to discover its truth, and believe its doctrines. I was for some time in a state of suspense, doubt and distraction. But soon the pure precepts of the gospel began to have

some influence on my life and conversation ; as I perceived that the morality taught by Christ was infallibly right, and I resolved to regulate my conduct according to his instructions, at least as much as I could : I left off cursing and swearing, filthy talking, &c. By caution, I soon was able, in a great measure, to refrain from breaking out into violent passions on small provocations : to be short, I endeavoured to resist every evil propensity and disposition, and I prayed for divine assistance to enable me so to do ; and soon found myself much freed from evil words, actions, and thoughts ; and found much satisfaction in my mind on being able to conquer bad habits.

I had not long lived as much like a Christian as I could, before I began to believe like one. The words of Christ were verified in me. *If, saith he, ye will do the will of God, ye shall know of the doctrines which I teach, whether they be of God.* And I cannot help believing, that such as truly and sincerely perform their duty towards God and man, will, by some means or other, be led to the knowledge and belief of all such truths as are absolutely necessary to be believed. But while we are guilty of impiety towards God and of doing to our neighbours as we would not that they should do to us, it is no wonder if we should *ever be learning, and never be able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

By this time I can scarcely think it possible for you not to see that the Christian has very great advantages over an infidel. Infidelity tends to degrade and sink the man to a brute. Christianity dignifies and exalts its votaries to the skies.

—————Man all immortal, hail !

Hail, heav'n—All-lavish of strange gifts to man !

Thine all the glory ; man's the boundless bliss :

Oh, may I breathe no longer than I breathe

My soul in praise to him, who gave my soul,

And all her infinite of prospect fair. DR. YOUNG.

Devotion elevates the soul to its native dignity : when renewed by divine grace it as naturally tends to the great source of its happiness, as fire does towards the sun, or as waters towards the sea. While others are saying, *Who will shew us any good ? Who will shew us the way to be happy ?* The Christian says, *Lift up thou the light of thy countenance upon me.* You know where it is also said, that *God will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon him.* In all these changes and troubles of this mortal state, he has a divine cordial to refresh and cheer his spirits when weak and faint ; even death itself cannot terrify him who stedfastly believes in him *who is the resurrection and the life.* No one ever heard of a christian that was troubled, or terrified in his conscience when he came to die, for having been a christian ; but on the contrary, tens of thousands have in their last hours, set their seal to the truth of its divine doctrines, and have quitted this life in *certain hope and joyful expectation of a blessed immortality.*

The chamber where the good man meets his fate
Is privileg'd beyond the common walk
Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heaven,

Before I bid you farewell for ever, I beg you to excuse my giving you the trouble of reading two such long letters, as I could not rest satisfied in my mind, if I had not informed you of the alteration that has taken place in my sentiments, and of course in my life. I hope that you also will see what a dreadful delusion you have for so many years been under. Should that not be the case, I would wish you to remember that a christian has greatly the advantage of you. Were it possible for him to be in a delusion, it must be a happy delusion that affords such sources of comfort in this state of existence, and even in the hour of death. And in case there should be no future state, you will not be able to laugh at him. But should the infidel be in a delusion! The dye, the fatal dye will then be cast, and all will be lost for ever!

I am, Sir,

Yours,

J. L."

Atveston, Feb. 27, 1803

Although I have transcribed this very long letter, yet I must inform you, that the person to whom this, and the preceding one were wrote, leads so bad a life, that I have but small hopes that they will make any lasting impression on him.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

LETTER XIII.

—“Those dreadful dangers past,
 “Knowledge will dawn and bless the mind at last.”

DEAR FRIEND,

NOT many miles from this place lives my old friend Dick Thritty, who was introduced to you in a former letter. I lately paid him a visit, and soon suspected that some alteration had taken place in Dick's sentiments from the change which I perceived in his conduct. I informed you that after Dick commenced freethinker, he was not always able to resist the temptations of immodest women. At this interview I remarked that he was disgusted with a genteel dressed man for having talked loosely in the absence of the ladies; he repeated the two well known lines of Pope

Immodest words admit of no defence,
 For want of decency is want of sense.

I also observed that he was displeased with another of the company for speaking disrespectfully of the clergy in general. “Whenever I hear (said Dick) any person vilify the clergy as a body, I am obliged to conclude that he is not only an enemy to religion, but also a foe to morality, and of course a very great enemy to society. I think it is Addison who says, That such as are prejudiced against the names religion, church, priest, and the like, should consider the clergy as so many philosophers, the churches as schools, and their

sermons as lectures, for the reformation and improvement of their audience. How would the heart of Socrates or Tully have rejoiced, had they lived in a nation where the law had made provision for philosophers to read lectures of morality and theology, every seventh day, in several schools erected at the public charge, through the whole country; at which lectures, all ranks and sexes without distinction, were obliged to be present for their general improvement. And what wicked wretches would they think those men who should endeavour to defeat the purpose of so divine an institution!"

I was also glad to find that Dick was a great encourager of Sunday-schools, and also of day schools for the poor who are unable to pay for their children's schooling. He informed me that some gentlemen of his neighborhood were averse to such schools, merely because they wished not to subscribe a trifle towards their support: and yet, said he, those gentlemen think themselves christians!

It perhaps may appear rather odd, but I remember that, many years since, Dick, although a freethinker, never liked to hear thoughtless young men speak against religion, but would even take pains to convince them that they were ignorant of what they were finding fault with; that they were enemies to religion because it condemned them for their irregularities. He would even tell them that they were only planting thorns in their sick or death-beds. I even recollect that when a young man was once arguing against the being of the Deity, he lent him Knight on the Being and

Attributes of God, and very seriously advised him to read it with attention ; and this too at a time when he was very sceptical himself : But I strongly suspect that Dick is quite altered in his principles.

Formerly, Dick used to assert that all the precepts of morality contained in the gospel were taught by the heathen philosophers. But now he is convinced of his mistake, and he has discovered that their best precepts were derived from divine revelation, partly through the Jews who were scattered amongst all nations, and partly from the Old Testament after it was translated into Greek. Josephus has fully proved this point.

Formerly, Dick thought that Socrates was a more exalted personage than Christ ; now he asserts, that Christ was a far superior character to Socrates, and that the morality which he taught is the most pure, and best calculated to make mankind happy—that a nation of *real* christians would be a heaven upon earth.

Some years since, Dick would talk much about the charming liberty of thinking freely, enjoyed by such as shake off the fetters which priests had riveted on mankind ; now he does not scruple to acknowledge that, upon the whole, he thinks a real christian has greatly the advantage, even in this life, of the unbeliever. I can, (said he to a friend one day) almost believe Bishop Horne's description of the Christian religion. He then took down a volume of the good Bishop's sermons, and read the following passage :

‘ A religion cheerful in itself, and making those
 ‘ cheerful who are partakers of it ; cheerful in
 ‘ trouble ; cheerful out of trouble ; cheerful while
 ‘ they live ; cheerful when they die ; cheerful in
 ‘ using well the blessings of this life ; cheerful in
 ‘ expecting the blessings of the next ; cheerful
 ‘ through pain, while they believe in the great
 ‘ and precious promises made to them ; cheerful
 ‘ through hope, which depends on their accomplish-
 ‘ ment ; cheerful through charity, in doing
 ‘ acts of mercy and loving kindness, till they come
 ‘ to that land of plenty, where none shall want
 ‘ to those regions of joy from whence sorrow shall
 ‘ be for ever excluded.’

While my friend Dick was reading the above passage, he seemed animated ; he was much more so while I read the following lines from Dr Young’s Night Thoughts.

Religion’s ALL. Descending from the skies
 To wretched man — — — — —
 Religion ; Providence ; an after-state !
 Here is firm footing ; here is solid rock ;
 This can support us ; all is sea besides,
 Sinks under us ; bestorms and then devours.
 His hand the good man fastens on the skies,
 And bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl.

— — — — —
 Believe, and shew the reason of a man ;
 Believe, and taste the pleasure of a god ;
 Believe, and look with pleasure on the tomb.

Dick is rather shy in discovering what his real sentiments now are ; but from what I have noticed I have reason to think that he is really convinced of his errors ; and that if he already is not a christian, he wishes to become one. But when

person has once gone such lengths in infidelity as Dick had, it is hard to return to that pure, open simplicity which the gospel requires of such as profess to believe its doctrines. As Dick's conversation is different from what it used to be, so also is his conduct, as I remarked in many instances. His compassion for the labouring poor is much increased, and he does much good among them ; he not only relieves such as apply to him, but he inquires after objects of distress ; and, at the same time, he is careful not to encourage idleness, drunkenness, &c.

Mr. D. and Mr. C. were near neighbours to each other, and acquaintances of Dick ; these neighbours had conceived great animosity to each other ; Dick set about reconciling them. One day, when Mr. D. was speaking very ill-naturedly of Mr. C. Dick desired him not to bear Mr. C. so much ill-will, for, said he, I have heard Mr. C. speak very well of you. This softened Mr. D. a good deal. At another time, Mr. C. was very violent in his conversation against Mr. D. Dick advised him to forget and forgive, as he was persuaded Mr. D. had done ; he speaks kindly of you, and is, I believe, sorry that trifles should so long have interrupted good neighbourhood between you and him. By this method Dick in a short time made them better friends than they had ever been before. *Blessed is the peace-maker*, saith Christ. Dick is still happy if he can reconcile any of his acquaintance to each other ; but he now will not effect it by saying what is not strictly true, as he did in the above

instances ; he seems to know that a man must
not lie even for God.

I am,
 Dear friend, Yours.

LETTER XIV.

The virtues grow on *immortality* ;
 That Root destroy'd they wither and expire.
 A Deity *believ'd* will nought avail ;
Rewards and punishments make God ador'd :
 And *hopes and fears* give conscience all her pow'r.

DEAR FRIEND,

IN giving you my further observations on
 Dick Thrifty, I will continue to set them down as
 nearly as I can, as they occurred.

I found him one morning with Law's Serious
 Call to a Holy Life, and Taylor's Holy Living
 and Holy Dying, by his side ; in his hand was
 the Whole Duty of Man. What ! a philosopher
 reading the "Whole Duty of Man ?" Had you
 been reading Puffendorf's Law of Nature,
 should not have wondered at it. The reply was
 "Let me tell you it is worth any philosopher's
 reading ; from what I have read of it, I think
 an excellent work." I confessed, that I had read
 but a small part of it ; but from what I had read
 it appeared to me to be a very good work ; I had
 sold thousands of that book, and scarce knew

any work that ever had so great and lasting a sale, it being a century and a half since it was first published : the other works of the same author have also had a great sale : his *Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety* should be read more than it is : his *Ladies' Calling*, and his *Gentleman's Calling*, are now much neglected, as most of our ladies and gentlemen have callings of a very different nature, or rather, as it appears, have no calling at all.

Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying*, he said, was also an excellent work. I also joined in its praise. Law, in his *Serious Call*, he thought, had some of the most convincing arguments he ever met with, and his characters were master-pieces of the kind. I said that I had lately read it with great pleasure, and I hoped with some profit."

But, Dick, have you discarded the old heathen moralists?

"No, I believe I shall sometimes dip into them as long as I live ; I think, with you, that I have derived much benefit from reading them."

I told him, while I was reading Seneca, Plutarch, Epictetus, &c. I had often fancied myself a great philosopher, and conceited that my passions were subdued.

"Why that is just my case, and perhaps an hour after I have indulged those fine ideas, I suffer an old woman, or a servant to disturb, or even destroy my fine philosophical tranquility ; and then I am ashamed to find myself such a poor weak mortal."

"Virtue is kept alive by care and toil."

Dick continued, "I now have often recourse to divines; they write like men having authority, and they adduce stronger motives for us to subdue or regulate our passions and tempers; and, I think they have much more influence on my conduct than the mere reasoning of the ancient philosophers. You know that formerly I read pretty much divinity, and although the intimacy was long broken off, by my having contracted an aversion to these pious writers, because they threatened freethinkers with hell; yet we are become good friends again: so that whenever I look into any of those books, it seems like calling on an old sensible acquaintance that I had not seen for many years; I am much pleased while conversing on old subjects; and, though I might not approve of every thing he says, yet the conversation upon the whole may be pleasing and improving."

Dick, said I, you used to be open and above disguise; I have freely confessed to you, that I have sincerely repented of my long apostacy from the truth, and humbly hope for pardon and salvation through that Saviour whom you and I despised: tell me, are not you also convinced of your error? Are you not in heart a christian?

"An honest Deist, where the gospel shines,
"Matin'd to nobler in the christian ends."

"I confess," he replied, "that my sentiments are much altered, as you must have perceived. You and I have often read the same books, and made the same observations on men and things;

so that you will not be much surprised if I have been affected pretty much like yourself, by remarking the same events. I shall carry my remarks further back than you have done. You know that before the French revolution took place I had some young men and boys in my house as apprentices and shopmen. I have reason to think that those young people were not ignorant of my sentiments ; for as they dined with me and my friends, they must have, at times, heard free conversations, jokes on priests, &c. if not worse : for although I was not fond of propagating infidelity, yet from my friends, and perhaps from myself also, they must know that I paid no attention to religion. It is also likely that they read my free-thinking books. They also knew that I did not attend at any place of worship, nor did I require them to do it ; that my whole family spent Sundays in idle amusements. Those young men left me, and began the world without any sense of religion. Several of them, I believe, were free-thinkers ; nearly the whole of them dissipated the whole of what property they had of their own, got into debt, and became bankrupts. But though I saw the effects of infidelity in them, I was not properly affected by it. But since the French revolution, when I perceived the sad effects produced by the spreading of infidelity I began to think more seriously on the consequences ; but I was not fully acquainted with the extent of its mischief, until I came into the country to live, and found that it had infected all ranks, from the castle to the cottage.

“ A new world rises and new manners reign.”

"Gentlemen's servants, having been taught infidelity in London, and while waiting at table, have spread the contagion throughout the region of their acquaintance. Paine's Age of Reason has been handed from cottage to cottage. The honest and industrious part of the poor, amidst their poverty and afflictions, used to derive great consolation from the hopes of a better world to come; but Paine and Co. have deprived them of their only comfort and support, and left them discontented with their station, and ready for mischief. Many that used to be constant at church on Sundays, now go to the ale-house, where they encourage one another in irreligion and vice.—Many that used to read their bibles in order to become better husbands, better fathers, better subjects, better neighbours, &c. now, if they look into it at all, it is only to endeavour to turn it into ridicule.

"The hope of heaven, and the fear of hell, I now am fully convinced certainly had very great influence on the conduct of thousands, who now laugh at any talk of the day of judgment, heaven and hell; and having got rid of those restraints, they indulge themselves in one vice after another, until no wickedness is too bad for them to commit."

In proof of what you assert, (I replied) permit me to inform you, that about two years since I made an excursion into the West of England; happening to spend a few hours in a large town through which I passed, I called on a very respectable tradesman, an old acquaintance of mine. While we were conversing in his shop on the

great prevalence of infidelity and its immoral tendency, one of his neighbours, a very decent looking man came in, who, I learnt in the course of conversation, had lately been a very wicked infidel and a rebel, but had repented of his infidelity, and was become a loyal subject and a pious christian.

He informed us, that while he lived in London, (which was about four or five years before this conversation) he worked in a shop with twelve other men, eleven of whom and himself were infidels, and that the whole of them were rebels. To such a height of wickedness and infatuation had these poor wretches arrived, that six of them set out one day with a fixed determination to kill—a certain person. In the Strand, one of the most desperate of these execrable villains was taken so very ill as to be able to go no further; but this did not deter the others, but on they went to perpetrate the dreadful deed, which they would have effected, had not an uncommon circumstance taken place which prevented the horrid crime from being committed. This circumstance I cannot relate, as the mentioning it would discover the person they intended to murder.

I also observed, that the doctrine of rewards and punishments were taught in a confused and imperfect manner by the old heathens; that the belief of those doctrines, and the fear of the avenging gods, had very great influence on the moral conduct of mankind in general: and it is worth remarking that Juvenal, in his second satire, imputes the shocking and detestable crimes which disgraced Rome in his days to the infidel notions that then prevailed among them.

“ Though the system of Paganism is justly condemned by reason and scripture, yet it assumed, as true, several principles of the first importance to the preservation of public manners; such as a persuasion of invisible power, of the folly of incurring the divine vengeance for the attainment of any present advantage; and the divine approbation of virtue: so that, strictly speaking, it was the mixture of truth in it which gave it all its utility; which is well stated by the *great and judicious* Hooker, in treating on this subject. ‘ Seeing therefore it doth thus appear,’ says that venerable author, ‘ that the safety of all states dependeth upon religion; that religion unfeignedly loved perfecteth man’s abilities unto all kinds of various services in the commonwealth; that man’s desire is, in general, to hold no religion but the true; and whatever good effects do grow out of their religion, who embrace, instead of the true, a false, the roots thereof are certain parts of the light of truth, intermingled with the darkness of error; because no religion but one can wholly and only consist of truths, we have reason to think that all true virtues are to honor true religion as their parent, and all well-ordered commonweals love her as their chiefest stay.’—Eccles. vol. xiii. 5.

That arch infidel Voltaire, who has been one of the greatest enemies to the cause of religion, in his *Philosopher’s Dictionary*, under the word atheism, says, “ But with submission to Plutarch, nothing can be more evident, than that it was better for the Greeks to stand in awe of Ceres, Neptune, and Jupiter, than to be under no manner

of awe ; the sacredness of oaths is manifest and necessary ; and they that hold that perjury will be punished, are certainly more to be trusted than those who think a false oath will be attended with no ill consequences. It is beyond all question, that in a policed city, even a bad religion is better than none."—The Senate of Rome, which almost totally consisted of Atheists, both in theory and practice, believing neither in providence nor a future state. It was a meeting of philosophers, of votaries of pleasure and ambition ; all very dangerous sets of men, and who, accordingly, overturned the republic."

"I would not willingly lie at the mercy of an atheistical prince, who might think it his interest to have me pounded in a mortar : I am certain it would be my fate. And were I a sovereign, I would not have about me any atheistical courtiers, whose interest it might be to poison me, as then I must every day be taking alexipharmics ; so necessary is it both for princes and people, that their minds be thoroughly imbued with an idea of a Supreme Being, the Creator, Avenger, and Rewarder."

This subject is now no longer to be disputed at all, as we have seen such dreadful effects of infidelity since it has been propagated among the people at large.

"I confess, (said Dick) that I was long in an error on this head. I, like many other freethinkers, on observing that fraud and other vices were committed by such as passed for Christians ; and that among those who were sceptics, I knew sev-

eral whom I thought honest men; I too readily concluded, that the belief or disbelief of a future state had but little or no influence on society, nor should I ever have been convinced of my errors but for the manners of the times. The vile practices of some who call themselves christians may easily be accounted for ; a great number of those have scarce any more religion than horses ; they live and die as ignorant and stupid with regard to divine subjects as hogs. So that in fact they cannot be said to believe or disbelieve in christianity, although they are denominated christians. I have reason to believe that there are thousands in England who never were in any place of divine worship in the whole course of their lives ; and many of those that do by chance go into a church, know no more of the matter than such do as never go at all. And there is great reason to think that many who pass for Christians are atheists in principles, as well as practical knaves. A certain author says, "I know there are in notion and principle, as well as in practice, who think all honesty as well as religion, a mere cheat ; and by a very consistent conduct, reasoning, have resolved deliberately to do whatsoever by power or art they are able for their private advantage. Such as these never open themselves in friendship to others. They have no such passion for truth or love of mankind. They have no quarrel with religion or morals ; they know what use to make of them both upon occasion. If ever they discover their principles it is only at unawares, they are sure to preach up honesty, and go to church."

"I was lately told of a grocer, who, on a Sunday-evening used to call his shopman, and address him in the following manner: "John, have you put the dried berries with the currants?"

"Yes, Sir." "Have you put the ash leaves with the tea?" "Yes, Sir." "Have you put the sand with the moist sugar?" "Yes, Sir," "Then, John, come to prayer."

I will also give you one instance of this kind that fell within my own observation. About twelve months after I first became acquainted with a party of infidels, there was one very young man introduced who was an advocate for atheism, and yet he was a student, on charity, in a dissenting academy; and used to boast of the deceptions which he made use of to deceive the heads of the seminary. He informed us, that at the stated time of prayer, when they all kneeled down round the room, with their faces towards the wall, he used to conceal a card in his hand, on which he had a composed form set down in shorthand. So that when it came to his turn to pray extemporally, he read his card; and he was thought to possess a fine gift in prayer. This young infidel also boasted of the deceptions which he put on others; he would pretend to piety among religious people, and borrow books and sell them. Not long after this he deceived and took in his infidel friend, who introduced him to the party. He was for some reason or other at last discharged from the academy; had that not been the case, some congregation might have been deceived by his abilities and pretensions to piety, and have had an atheist for their pastor.

I have no doubt but this class of unbelievers is much larger than is imagined. *Know ye not, say Paul to the Corinthians, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ; be not deceived neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor drunkards, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom.* And yet how many are there to be found who deliberately commit those sins. How is it possible for one to suppose that such can believe the above text, and a hundred others of the same import. We know that a person may be precipitated into grievous sins, and yet may be called a believer, although a weak one ; but is it possible for a person to live year after year, in the deliberate commission of any great known sin, and really believe that *God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and reward every man according to the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or bad.* Indeed the scriptures rank such among *unbelievers* : and freethinkers should not rank them as believers, but among their own class. In Gilpin's 48th sermon, vol. 2. is the following passage : " I address myself next to those who pretend to believe the gospel, and yet neglect its precepts.

" There are many such christians in the world—Christians, who go generally to church—who appear occasionally at the sacrament—and who talk of the bible as the *best book in the world* ; but yet, in fact, lead their lives as much at variance with it, as if it had never been intended as a rule of conduct. They are as much given up to the

business and pleasures, and vanities of life, as much led away by the fashions and dissipated manners which they see around them, as if they believed this world was the only place where they expected happiness. And yet they profess to believe in a religion that will reward all who obey it; and punish all who disobey it.

“If you really believe all this, the pleasures of this world will appear of little value to you, compared with the happiness of the next; and the severest restraints of religion, instead of being thought hardships, will be received with cheerfulness. Is this the case? If you are a true believer, the answer is plain; yet this contradiction between your belief and your practice, makes it, I fear, too plain, this is not the case. The matter then resolves itself into this, that you are in the situation with the infidel, only to his disbelief you add hypocrisy.

“If you are under the influence of *self-deceit*, and imagine you are more sincere in your belief of these things than you really are, put your sincerity to the test; try yourself by an easy experiment. You are assured, that if you take proper steps, you may get possession of a considerable fortune. If you really believe this information, how will you act? Will you not take every method in your power that leads to the possession of it? Our blessed Saviour has placed this matter in the same light. If a man believed there was a treasure in a field, would he not sell all he had and buy the field? In the affairs of this world, you judge of a man's being sincere in his belief, by

the sincerity of his practice. If he be under the influence of faith in common life, he never fails to shew his faith by its influence on his actions.

It is exactly the same in religion. You pretend to believe that you shall give an account hereafter of your actions—that there is a heaven to reward and a hell to punish them, as they are good or bad. You say you believe all this: but still it does not produce a christian life. Away with such hypocritical pretences. Would any man leap from a precipice if he *really believed* a bottomless pit would receive him? Those who pretend to no faith, and those who pretend to faith, but leave a holy life out of the question, are both infidels alike."

Some of those ungodly pretenders to christianity are so very ignorant of its doctrines, as to think that because Christ died for sinners (which is the only part of the gospel they ever attended to) God will, however wicked their lives may have been, pardon them, provided they do but repent as they call it, on their death-bed. Old Baxter tells us of a shocking wicked man who persisted in a very profligate way of life, because he was sure that if he could but say three words, "God pardon me," before he died, he was sure to be forgiven. It seems he even forgot those three words, for his horse leaping over a bridge with him, he said "Devil take all." I have conversed with many who have much the same notion; they do not know that repentance is a change of heart and life, but think it consists in a few expressions of sorrow, and calling God to pardon them for

Christ's sake. Gilpin, in his excellent sermon on Christ's promise to the thief on the cross, says, "I have seldom seen sickness draw on a change of life. The sinner has generally returned, after his recovery, to his old habits. All therefore that a minister of the gospel can say, is only this. that *God has no where promised in the covenant of grace, forgiveness to any repentance, but what is followed by a holy life ; and if men are saved, after a course of wickedness, on death-bed repentance, they are not saved according to any known conditions of the Gospel.* Gilpin's Sermons, vol. ii. p. 122, 2d edition.

—————**Fatally he errs**
Whose hope fore-runs repentance, and who presumes
That God will pardon when he's tir'd of sin,
And like a stale companion casts it off.
Oh ! arrogant, delusive, impious thought,
To meditate commodious truce with heaven,
When death's swift arrow smites him unprepar'd,
And that protracted moment never comes,
Or comes too late : Turn then, presumptuous man,
Turn to the sinner, —————
Who died reviling, there behold thy doom.

CUMBERLAND'S CALVARY.

I have also met with many who keep a shorter account with God ; they mistake the means for the end. When they can find time to go to church, it is not with any view to obtain grace and strength to enable them to forsake their bad practices ; they have not the least inclination to alter their wicked course of life ; but think that by going to church and begging pardon, their old score is

wiped off; if to going to church, they add the reading a chapter or two in the bible, on Sunday, they rest quite satisfied, and suppose their accounts fully balanced.

To reckon any of these people among the believers of the gospel of Christ, is an abuse of words. But it is time to conclude this long epistle.

I am,
Dear Friend,
Your's.



LETTER XV.

"Consider man as *mortal*, all is dark,
"And wretched; *Reason* weeps at the survey."

DEAR FRIEND,

WHILE Dick and I were conversing after dinner on the important objects mentioned in the last chapter, we were astonished at the declaration of a lady in company, who seriously and deliberately assured us, that she had often wished her soul was mortal, that it might die with the body; that the idea of annihilation was so far from being frightful to her, that it would afford her very great satisfaction; if she could but be sure that when she had paid the debt of nature, she should no longer have any kind of conscious existence, as she thought it was now

————“ A serious thing to die ! My soul !
 “ What a strange moment must it be, when near
 “ Thy journey’s end thou hast the gulf in view !
 “ That awful gulf no mortal e’er repass’d
 “ To tell what’s doing on the other side !”

But if she was but sure of being annihilated, it would take a weight off her spirits that sometimes oppressed her much.

I am well informed that this lady is very amiable. She is about forty. During thirty years which she lived with her father, she was a very dutiful daughter ; the ten that she has been a wife, she ever has been, and still is,

“ Blest with temper, whose unclouded ray
 “ Can make to-morrow, cheerful as to-day ;
 “ She never answers till her husband cools,
 “ And if she rules him, never shews she rules.
 “ Charms by accepting, by submitting sways,
 “ Yet has her humour most when she obeys.”

Her life has been a life of innocence ; the continued ill-treatment which she for years received from some of her relations, could never put her out of temper, or cause her to utter an ill-natured word ; or to be guilty of an unkind action. She possesses an uncommonly sympathising, feeling heart, is very kind and charitable to the poor.

That so charming and virtuous a lady & this should wish that existence might terminate with this short life, is, I believe, not a common circumstance. On our expressing our surprise, and requesting to be made acquainted with her reasons for so unnatural a wish, she said, that “ she

was not satisfied with herself, she thought her disposition was not so piously disposed as she found the Almighty required; she had no desire to go to church, and when she was there she was not as devout as she should be. She seldom prayed much in private. She did not know that she had ever said or done any thing wrong. But then she was ignorant of divine things, and felt an indifference towards them; and having doubts on her mind, rather than run the hazard of being eternally miserable, she had many times wished to be annihilated." She said, these melancholy thoughts were not lasting, she was in general happy. Mrs. Rowe thus describes a state of mind nearly similar.

—Starts at the awful prospect of the deep,
Still fears to explore the dark and unknown way,
Still backward shrinks and meditates delay;
Spins out the time, and lingers in debate,
Displeas'd to try an unexperienc'd state.

If the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear? And if so virtuous a woman has very uneasy thoughts, as to her acceptance with God, what must, or rather, what ought the generality of our fashionable ladies to feel.

Dick took up his favorite book the Night Thoughts, and read to her the following lines:

O thou great Arbiter of life and death!
Nature's immortal immaterial sun!
Whose all prolific beam late call'd me forth
From darkness, teeming darkness, where I lay,
The worm's inferior, and, in rank, beneath.

The dust I tread on, high to bear my brow,
 To drink the spirit of the golden Day,
 And triumph in existence ; and couldst know
 No motive, but my bliss ! and hast ordain'd
 A rise in blessing ! with the *Patriarch's* joy,
 Thy call I follow to the land *unknown* ;
 I trust in thee, and know in whom I trust ;
 Or life, or death, is equal ; neither weighs ;
 All weighs in this—O let me live to thee.

“This, Madam, (continued Dick) is the only disposition that can possibly make us happy : the good Doctor appears to have had that faith and trust in God, which every real christian should have. In another place, he says,

If sick of folly, I relent ; Christ writes
 My name in heav'n, with that inverted spear
 (A spear deep dipt in blood) which pierc'd his side,
 And open'd there a font for all mankind
 Who strive to combat crimes, to drink and live ;
 This, only this, subdues the *Fear of Death*.

The parents of this lady I find are called good kind of people ; when they have no company at home, they go to church once of a Sunday ; are kind, obliging neighbours, good to the poor, &c. But it does not appear that they consider themselves possessed of an immortal part, which must be happy or miserable to all eternity

They have, it seems, a Bible in their house, carefully locked up. For the first ten years after they were married, this bible was brought down stairs once in a year, or once in two years at farthest, to insert in the blank leaf the names of their children, together with the year, day, and

hour of the day, in which each of the little strangers made its first appearance. After the children were grown old enough to dispute about their age, the bible was several times produced to settle these disputes; but after some of the girls had reached their twenty-fourth year without being married, the bible was taken more care of than ever; as the eldest daughters were always ready to settle the ages of the younger part of the family, to save them the trouble of looking into the said blank leaf.

Although one cannot help remarking with concern, that some of those who are acquainted with the theory of religion, and who, to shew their knowledge, or for worse purposes, introduce it unseasonably, are yet known to be more relax in the performance of the duties it enjoins, than some that say little, and know less; yet, surely, those who in the higher walks of life totally neglect that important subject, and bring up their children in gross ignorance of religion, must certainly be blameable in a very high degree. *My people* (saith God) *perish for want of knowledge.* It is really astonishing that mankind should employ so much of their time in acquiring the knowledge of the most trifling things; and, yet contentedly, remain in ignorance of the christian religion, which tends so much to enlarge the powers of the human mind; and is the only basis of *happiness* here, and *hereafter*.

I remember reading, thirty years since, in old Pemble's Treatise of Grace, in folio, an account of an old man, who, on his death-bed, was asked by the minister, What he thought God was? He

replied, "A fine old man." What do you think Jesus Christ is? "A hopeful youth," was the reply. What do you think your soul is? "A great bone in my back," was the answer.

I am sorry to say, that this excellent lady's knowledge in divine subjects but little exceeds that of Pemble's poor old man; but in sincerity and openness of heart, I never saw one that exceeded her.

I am, dear friend,
Your's.

LETTER XVI.

The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Hell of Heaven,—PARADISE LOST.

DEAR FRIEND,

IN October 1798, S. P. Peach, Esq. being Major of the Tockington Volunteers, gave an entertainment to his corps, and others of his neighbours, in honour of Lord Nelson's glorious victory. This was done on the lawn before his house. The good cheer, the company, music, songs, bonfire, fire-works, &c. had a wonderful effect on the poor countrymen; one of them, in raptures, exclaimed, (by my side) "This is heaven upon earth!" Upon which another of our volunteers very sincerely and earnestly declared, that "he did not think that heaven was half so fine a place." This had not the least appearance of levity; but was an honest effusion of the heart.

I will give you another anecdote of a similar kind.

A neighbouring clergyman was sent for to pray with a farmer's wife, on the Marsh-Common, about five miles from my house. He, in order to reconcile her to her dying situation, and to send her quietly away, held forth on the happiness which all good people enjoy after death at the right hand of God; during which she shewed signs of impatience. The divine still kept on, and enlarged on the glory, splendour, &c. of heaven, until her patience being quite tired out, she exclaimed, "Don't tell me a long tale about the glory of Heaven; Old England, and the Marsh-Common for me."

Were it only a few poor ploughmen, and a Marsh-Common farmer's wife, that had such low thoughts of the happiness of a future state, one should not be so much surprised; but is there not reason to think that there are thousands who have no better opinion of heavenly pleasure than these poor untaught creatures that have acquired but few ideas above the hogs they feed, or the beasts they drive. The lady that was introduced to you in my last letter freely confessed herself to be of that number. She informed us, that except now and then, when the thought of death, and the

—"Anxious casting up of what might be,
Alarm'd her peaceful bosom,"

and made her gloomy, she had always been happy through life; that she would rather live here for

ver than go to heaven ; that she had not conceived very favourable ideas of the happiness there to be enjoyed ; and as she had no knowledge of, or relish for divine things, she did not see how she could comfortably spend an eternity in a place where nothing else was going forward. I fear this lady has, in giving us her own thoughts, given us the thoughts of thousands ; and I think she reasoned well. There cannot be the least doubt that the reason why many wish to go to heaven, is not from any love they have for God or heaven ; but as they know that there are but two places, they wish to go there to avoid hell. How many are there that think the sabbath a very tiresome day, because they have no relish for religious duties ; nay, how many of those who go to church not only do not find any pleasure there, but are glad when the service is over ? What enjoyment then can such expect in heaven ? I well remember that both I and my companions formerly used to laugh at the thoughts of going to heaven ; and were so profane as to say that we should not like for ever to sit on a cloud and sing hallelujah ; and I fear we spoke the real sentiments of many more. Before any one can properly wish for heaven, or enjoy it hereafter, he must repent, and pray until God gives him a clean heart, and renews a right spirit within him. *Old things must be done away, all things must become new.* And then he will be meet to be a partaker of the inheritance with the saints in light.

But to return. When the lady had expressed her mean ideas of the joys of heaven, Dick began to spout away,

Thy nature immortality ! who knows :
 And yet who knows it not ? It is but life
 In stronger thread and brighter colours spun,
 And spun for ever.——

—————How great

To mingle *int'rests*, *converse*, amities,
 With all the sons of reason scattered wide
 Thro' habitable space, wherever born,
 Howe'er endow'd ! To live free citizens
 Of universal nature ; to lay hold
 By more than feeble *faith* on the Supreme ;
 To call heav'n's unfathomable mines
 Our own ! To rise in science as in bliss,
 Initiate in the secrets of the skies !
 To read creation, in its mighty plan ;
 In the bare bosom of the Deity !
 To see before each glance of piercing thought,
 All cloud, all shadows, blown remote ; and have
 No mystery—but that of love divine—
 From darkness, and from dust, to such a scene !
 Love's element ; true joy's illustrious home !
 From earth's sad contrast (now deplor'd) more fair !
 What exquisite vicissitude of fate !
 Blest absolution of our blackest hour !
 ————These are thoughts that make man, man,
 The wise illumine ; aggrandise the great.

DR. YOUNG.

How, Madam, do you like such a Heaven a this ? “ O the description is delightful, charming I could have no objection to such a heaven to morrow ;” and she acknowledged that she saw no thing romantic in the poet's glowing description She believed that had she given the subject a proper consideration, she must have had more favourable ideas of the happiness promised to those that fear God and keep his commandments.

I repeated the following lines of Horace :

Dost hear ? or sporting in my brain
 What wildly-sweet delirium reign ?
 Lo ! 'mid Elysium's balmy groves,
 Each happy shade transported roves,
 I see the living scene display'd,
 Where rills and breathing gales sigh murmuring thro'
 the shades.

FRANCIS.

She liked the christian's heaven best, and, smiling, said, that as we seemed to be acquainted with the country, she should be glad if we would give her some further account of it. We quoted the following passages.

Look up my soul, pant toward th' eternal hills ;
 Those heav'ns are fairer than they seem ;
 There pleasures all sincere glide on crystal rills ;
 There not a dreg of guilt defiles,
 Nor grief disturbs the stream !
 That Canaan knows no noxious thing,
 No cursed soil, no tainted spring,
 No roses grow on thorns, nor honey wears a sting.

Dr. Watts' Lyric Poems.

I knew a man, whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth ;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which is not lawful (or possible) for man to utter.

ST. PAUL.

—What is death, that I should fear it ?
 To die ! why 'tis to triumph ; 'tis to join
 The great assembly of the good and just ;
 Immortal worthies, heroes, prophets, saints !
 Oh, 'tis to join the band of holy men
 Made perfect by their sufferings ! 'Tis to meet
 My great progenitors ; they, with whom the Lord
 Deign'd to hold familiar converse ! 'Tis to see

Bless'd Noah and his children, once a world !
 'Tis to behold, Oh, rapture to conceive !
 Those we have known, and lov'd, and lost below !
 To join the blest hosannas to their King !
 Whose face to see, whose glory to behold,
 Alone were heav'n, tho' saint or seraph none
 Should meet our sight, and only God were there !
 This is to die ! who would not die for this ?
 Who would not die that we may live for ever ?

MRS. H. MORE.

Let us suppose a man blind and deaf from his birth, who being grown up to man's estate, is by the dead-palsy, or some other cause, deprived of his feeling, tasting, and smelling; and at the same time has the impediment of his hearing removed and the film taken off his eyes; what the five senses are to us, that the touch, taste, and smell were to him. And any other ways of perception of a more refined and extensive nature were to him as inconceivable, as to us those are which will one day be adapted to perceive those things which "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive." And it would be just as reasonable in him to conclude that the loss of those three senses could not possibly be succeeded by any new inlets of perception as in a modern freethinker to imagine there can be no state of life and perception without the senses he enjoys at present. Let us further suppose the same person's eyes, at their first opening, to be struck with a great variety of the most gay and pleasing objects, and his ears with a melodious concert of vocal and instrumental music: behold him amazed, ravished, trans-

ported; and you have some faint glimmering idea of the extatic state of the soul in that article in which he emerges from this sepulchre of flesh into life and immortality.

ADDISON.

Who would not willingly leave a *foolish, forward, ill-natured* world, for the blessed society of wise friends and *perfect lovers*? What a felicity must it be to spend an eternity in such a noble conversation! where we shall hear the deep *philosophy* of heaven communicated *with mutual freedom* in the wise and amiable discourses of *angels and glorified spirits*: who without any reserve or affectation of mystery, without *passion, or interest, or peevish contention* for victory, do freely *philosophize*, and *mutually* impart the treasures of each other's knowledge. For since all saints there are great philosophers, and all philosophers perfect saints, we must needs *suppose knowledge and goodness, wisdom and charity* to be equally intermingled throughout all their conversation; being so, what can be imagined more delightful! When therefore we shall leave this *impertinent, unsocial* world, and all our *good old friends* that have gone to heaven before us meet us as soon as we are landed on the shore of *eternity*, and with infinite congratulations for our safe arrival, shall conduct us into the company of the *patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs*, and introduce us into an intimate acquaintance with them, and with all those brave and generous souls who by their *glorious examples* have recommended themselves to the world; when we shall be familiar friends with

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angels and archangels, and all the courtiers of heaven shall call us brethren, and bid us enter into their Master's joy.

My friend Dick said, that he had often pleased himself with the hopes of not only seeing and being acquainted with eminent christians, such as Newton, Locke, Boyle, Fenelon, Pascal, the Man of Ross, Dr. Johnson, J. Hanway, Howard and others, but also Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, Cicero, Cato, &c.

I advised our good lady to read Dr. Scott's Christian Life, particularly the first part; and also Sherlock, on the Happiness of good men in a future state; and Dr. Watts, on the Happiness of Separate Spirits. I also told her that she would find some rational, and many amusing passages on the happiness of the celestial regions, in Mrs. Rowe's works. I will conclude this long letter with a few lines of that pious lady.

O, come ! ye sacred gusts, ye pure delights,
Ye heav'nly sounds, ye intellectual sights ;
Ye gales of paradise, that lull to rest,
And fill with silent calm the peaceful breast :
With you, transporting hopes, that boldly rise,
And swell, in blissful torrents, to the skies ;
That soar with angels on their splendid wings,
And search th' arcana of celestial things.
Here let me dwell and bid the world adieu !
And still converse, ye glorious scenes, with you.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's,

LETTER XVII.

Thus *Earth*, and all that earthly minds admire,
 Is swallow'd in *Eternity's* vast round.
 To that stupendous view when souls awake,
Time's toys subside ; and *equal* all below.

DR. YOUNG.

DEAR FRIEND,

I NOW sit down to give you a few more particulars relating to my conversion to christianity. My conversion was not instantancous, but progressive ; for, in retreating from the cause of infidelity, I disputed every inch of ground before I renquished it. I found it impossible long to remain a downright atheist, but was sceptical for some years ; and I even had an atheistical pamphlet, which was hard to be come at, reprinted, on hearing that the author had in great haste taken away nearly the whole of his own impression from the different booksellers where they had been left for sale. I also advised a Scotch bookseller to reprint another work in the cause of infidelity ; which he did, and I purchased many of the impression and sold them. During this period I did not think that the belief, or disbelief, of any article of faith, had any influence on the morals of mankind.

About nine or ten years since, one of the french emigrants wanted me very much to print a translation from the French of an atheistical work ; but having begun to see the bad effects of such publications, he could not prevail upon me

to have any thing to do with him or his works nor from that time do I recollect vending any of the new productions of that kind.

I for many years had doubts as to the immortality of the soul, and, at intervals, disbelieved that doctrine; but as I occasionally read the Night Thoughts of Dr. Young, his strong arguments in favour of the soul's immateriality and immortality, prevented me from settling in unbelief on that important article. I also once dreamed (pray do not laugh and think me still dreaming) that I saw the finest poem I had ever read in my life; on which I reasoned thus. As I never saw any composition equal to that which I read in my dream, and as from the ideas which I retained of it when I awoke, it appeared a thousand times more beautiful than any thing I could compose when awake, therefore my soul must be immaterial; for otherwise I could not, while in a state of sleep, have combined and arranged such a variety of beautiful and delightful ideas as to me appeared a new creation. On this head Bishop Butler says, "That we have no reason to think our organs of sense, perceiving, is confirmed by instances of persons losing some of them, the living beings themselves, their former occupiers, remaining unimpaired. It is confirmed also by the experience of dreams by which we find we are at present possessed of a latent, and, what would otherwise be, an unimagined, unknown power of perceiving sensible objects, in as strong and lively a manner without our external organs of sense as with them.

I presume, that the good Bishop in this passage

only speaks of our common dreams, which was by no means the case of mine.

The following lines were often impressed on my mind, and were repeated by me times without number, when alone :

—————Why shrinks the soul
Back on herself and startles at destruction ?
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us :
'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
And intimates eternity to man.
Eternity ! thou pleasing, dreadful thought !

ADDISON'S CATO.

It is not my design to adduce the proofs of those doctrines that I have again heartily embraced, but I cannot help inserting a few quotations on some of those points. Cicero says, in his *Tusc. Quest.* "We can never believe, that after the virtuous have struggled through all their labours, an infinitely good and Almighty God will let them fall into an eternal sleep." In another place he says, "If I am wrong in believing that the souls of men are immortal, I please myself in my mistake : nor while I live, will I ever chuse that this opinion, wherewith I am so much delighted, should be wrested from me ; but if at death I am to be annihilated, as some minute philosophers imagine, I am not afraid lest those wise men, when extinct too, should laugh at my error."

And in his charming treatise on old age, he says, "This is my firm persuasion, that since the human soul exerts itself with so great activity, since it has such a remembrance of the past, such a concern for the future, since it is enriched with

so many arts, sciences, and discoveries, it is impossible but the being which contains all these must be immortal."

I will conclude this with a few lines from my favourite author.

Eternity's vast ocean lies before thee.

Give the mind sea-room ; keep it wide of earth,

That rock of souls *immortal* ; cut thy cord ;

Weigh anchor ; spread thy sails ; call ev'ry wind ;

Eye the Great *Pole-star* ; make the Land of Life.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

I will proceed with my narrative in my next.

I am,

Dear friend,

Your's.



LETTER XVIII.

On argument alone my *faith* is built ;

Reason pursu'd is *Faith* ; and, unpursu'd

Where proof invites, tis Reason then no more :

And such our *Proof*, that, or our *Faith* is *right*,

Or *Reason* lies, and heav'n design'd it wrong.

DR. YOUNG.

DEAR FRIEND,

ABOUT eight years since, the being and providence of God were a good deal impressed on my mind, so that I often reflected on those important subjects in my garden, in the fields, in bed, in short, in all places. The principles and

duties of natural religion had some influence on my mind and conduct. I sometimes went to church, where I felt a spirit of devotion ; so that I found my heart engaged in the prayers, and felt some degree of thankfulness to God, I also felt the same spirit of devotion at times when not at church. Nor could I help admiring the character of Christ ; his precepts also appeared to me perfectly well calculated to promote both public and private happiness.

In this state of mind I went quietly and contentedly on for some years. As I had no relish for the ridiculous pursuits of those around me, my amusement was reading, or, now and then, scribbling.

I at last (as I have before informed you) began to read some extracts from books on divinity, which I found in the Reviews. Those extracts gave me a more thoughtful turn, and left my mind open to conviction. The first entire work that I read in defence of revealed religion, was Archdeacon Paley's View of the Evidences of Christianity.

By the time I had gone through this very able and convincing work once, I was effectually humbled, and obliged to cry out, God be merciful to me a dreadful sinner ! I was obliged to confess that the wisdom, power and love of God were displayed in the gospel.

But although I was convinced that the gospel was a revelation from God, yet I had great doubts as to the dispensations contained in the Old Testament : nor did I think the New Testament an inspired work : in short, I gave but little more

credit to either the Old or New Testament, than I did to Xenophon or Livy. As I believed that Xenophon and Livy were honest men, and faithful historians, I therefore credited their narrations. And even in this view of the authors of the New Testament, I could not help believing that the christian religion was a revelation of the will of God. On the same evidence, I saw that I ought to believe the Old Testament dispensations were from God; yet the various objections which unbelievers have repeatedly made to the Jewish dispensation, together with many texts in the Old Testament, were difficulties I could not get over, until I had read part of Paley again; and also the third enlarged edition of the first volume, and the second edition of the second volume of Jenkin's Reasonableness and certainty of the christian religion. This very extraordinary, learned and sensible work, gave me ample satisfaction on those heads: and it is worth remarking, that this work was written before Tyndal, Collins, Morgan, &c. wrote their objections and misrepresentations, which makes them the more inexcuseable. I have induced several of the clergy to look into this masterly work, who now think it a performance that discovers great reading, great abilities, and biblical learning.

When I had satisfied myself on the above heads, I still had my doubts as to some of the mysteries of the christian religion. The divinity of Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the atonement made by Christ, &c. I could not believe, because I could not comprehend them. I believed that Christ was sent by God, to give man-

kind a pure system of morality, to assure us of the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and future rewards and punishments : and that by his perfect life, his sufferings and death, he had given us an excellent example.— Further than this I could not believe, until I had again and again consulted the scriptures, various commentators, and the works of many other learned divines, from whom I received great assistance ; particularly from Jenkin, and also from Bishop Butler's *Analogy of Religion*, an exceedingly valuable work. In this study I have employed a very large portion of my time, and in it I have found a lasting source of pleasure and delight.

After all my investigation, although I assent to the truth of those doctrines, I do not pretend that I comprehend them. I only believe them, because I think they are taught in the Old Testament, and by Christ and his apostles in the New Testament.

The following passage in Butler's *Analogy of Religion*, pleased me much. "Hence, (says the doctor) namely, from analogical reasoning, Origen has with singular sagacity observed, that 'he who believes the scripture to have proceeded from him who is the Author of Nature, may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it, as we found in the constitution of nature.' On the quotation the Doctor adds, 'And in like way of reflection it may be added, that he who denies the scripture to have been from God, upon account of these difficulties, may, for the very same reason, deny the world to have been formed by

him. On the other hand, if there be an analogy or likeness between that system of things and dispensation of Providence which revelation informs us of, and that system of things and dispensation of Providence which experience, together with reason, informs us of, *i. e.* the known course of Nature ; this is a presumption, that they both have the same Author and cause."

I have often, like other infidels, laughed at people's believing what they did not understand ; without considering that, were we to believe no more than what we understand, even of the common operations of nature, we should scarce believe any thing.

Jenkin, when treating of the doctrine of the Trinity, vol. ii. p. 401, says, " The sum is, that in the most perfect unity of the Divine Nature, do subsist the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, between whom is a real distinction, which though not the same, yet is equivalent to the distinctions of persons among men. That there is this unity and this distinction, we learn from the scriptures ; but what kind of distinction this is, or how far it is to be reconciled with our notion of persons amongst men, and after what manner it is consistent with the unity of the Godhead, the scriptures have not told us, and it is impossible for us to determine." In page 333, he says, " But some men will say, how is this union between the divine and human nature in Christ made, or wherein doth it consist ? To whom we may reply, as our Saviour sometimes did, by asking another question, and inquiring, How the body and soul of man is united ? or How God is present in all

places? And how in him we live, move, and have our being?" Page 196, he observes, "The best philosophers have been able to give no account how motion can be communicated without an immediate impulse, or concurrence of the divine power." Page 147, "Through an immense void space, the sun's rays find their regular and constant way, and in a few minutes pass from the sun to the earth; for which there is no cause assignable from the attractive power; which should rather detain the rays of light in a perpetual circulation about the sun's centre, than dart them forth by so violent a motion to the remotest distance. But God said, *Let there be light, and there was light. He prepared the light and the sun.* This is the best and the most philosophical account that has ever been given of the productions of light." Again, "If all the fluids which the sun loses in a year, were brought into a solid form, it would not equal a grain of sand."

Gilpin in his second sermon observes, "But it is mysterious, says the deist." Aye, surely; and so is every pile of grass you tread on. But the question is not whether things be mysterious—for all things are mysterious—but whether the mystery be supported by evidence? The pile of grass appeals to all nature, for its being the work of God: and the truth of Christ's atonement, however mysterious, is supported by evidence equally strong.—It rests on all the evidence that scripture can give it."

"This great doctrine is supported also by the analogy of God's moral government, under which we all act as a kind of redeemers, and mediators

among each other, in our own little temporal affairs."

"Nor is it a weak argument in favour of this doctrine, when we appeal to our own feelings. We must be conscious, when we look into ourselves, of such unworthiness, as must entirely disqualify us for the divine favour, without some better introduction than our own. It is an opinion strongly implanted in our nature, Guilt always wishes for support." It is said of Leibnitz, that he never mentions the sacred books but with respect; *they are filled*, said he, *with a morality necessary to man*. He said also, we ought to judge of the works of God as wisely as Socrates did of those of Heraclitus, by saying, *That which I comprehend pleases me; I believe the rest would not please me less, if I understood it.*"

Man to himself

Is all a miracle, I cannot see
The latent cause, yet such I know there is,
That gives the body motion, nor tell
By what strange impulse 'tis, the ready limb
Performs the purposes of will. How then
Shall thou or I, who cannot span ourselves
In this our narrow vessel, comprehend
The being of a God?

VILLAGE CURATE.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

LETTER XIX.

Tell if thou knowest, why Conscience acts
 With tenfold force, when sickness, age, or pain
 Stands tott'ring on the precipice of death ?
 Or why such horror gnaws the guilty soul
 Of dying sinners, while the good man sleeps
 Peaceful and calm ; and with a smile expires ?

DR. GLYNN.

DEAR FRIEND,

YOU ask whether still I am satisfied and pleased with those parts of the Memoirs of my Life, in which I have made so free with Mr. Wesley and his people ? I answer in the negative. I am not pleased, or satisfied, on that head, for the following reasons.

I now think that I have treated serious subjects in too light and trifling a manner ; and that some of my stories should have been omitted, for obvious reasons. The late Mr. Badcock says, " In Warburton's works (against the Methodists) there is too much levity for a Bishop, and too much illiterate abuse for a Christian." Even while I remained a freethinker, I sometimes thought that I had been too severe towards them : as a christian, I see my faults in a still stronger light. A real religious person will be careful how he speaks of the faults and failings of others : nor will he treat religious subjects with levity.

Although I was an infidel when I wrote my Memoirs, yet I was very careful that, in what I wrote against the Methodists, nothing should

point against (what I conceived to be) christianity : but although I have not said any thing against what I conceived to be revealed religion ; yet I find that some infidels have so understood me ; from which I learn that what was intended to be levelled only against enthusiasm and fanaticism, is by some of those unbelievers supposed to be pointed against revealed religion, so that if by any means I have contributed towards confirming, or hardening any unbeliever in his infidelity, I am sorry on that account also.

In the latter end of the year 1791, when my *Memoirs* were first published, I had not witnessed, to its extent, the pernicious influence of infidel opinions upon all ranks in society. After I became better acquainted with the dreadful effects of infidelity in others, I was sorry for what I had done, for I was then fully convinced, that the generality of mankind will always be much happier and better while under the influence of religious fanaticism, and even superstition than when they have lost all regard to, or sense of religion. Besides, I had known by myself and others, that for want of sufficient knowledge, many when they are reasoned out of fanaticism, are liable to go to the other extreme, by plunging into infidelity.

If then, while yet an infidel, I could see reasons why my strictures on Mr. Wesley's people should have been omitted, you may easily conclude that I am not satisfied on that head, now my views of things are so much altered.

On this head I formerly quoted a passage from that inconsistent infidel Rousseau ; I found fault with it, because I did not understand it, (no un-

common thing); the reason I did not understand it was because I read it in a publication where it was garbled; I have since found it in its proper place and state, it is in the third volume of his *Emilius*, and from thence I will transcribe it.

‘ Avoid all those who, under pretence of explaining natural causes, plant the most destructive doctrines in the hearts of men; and whose apparent scepticism is an hundred times more dogmatical and affirmative, than the decisive tone of their adversaries. Under the haughty protest of being the only persons who are truly enlightened, honest, and sincere, they subject us imperiously to their magisterial decisions, and give us for the true principles of things, only unintelligible systems, which they have raised in their own imaginations. Add to this, that while they overturn, destroy, and trample under foot every thing that is respectable among mankind, they deprive the afflicted of the last consolation of their misery; and take from the rich and powerful the only check to the indulgence of their passions; and they eradicate from our hearts the remorse of guilt, and the hopes of virtue; absurdly boasting themselves at the time the friends and benefactors of mankind. The truth, say they, can never be hurtful: so far I am of their opinion, and this is to me a great proof that what they teach cannot be true.’

To the above, Rousseau adds, in a note, the following :

‘ The contending parties reciprocally attack each other with so many sophisms, that it would be a rash enterprise to undertake to ex-

pose them all. One of the most common on the philosophical side of the question is, to contrast an imaginary people, supposed to be all good philosophers, with another people all bad christians; as if it were more easy to make a people true philosophers than good christians. I know not whether among individuals, one be more easily met with than the other; but this I know, that when we speak of a people, we must suppose they would as much abuse a philosophy without religion, as they do religion without philosophy; and this consideration seems to me to make a great difference in the question. Bayle has proved very acutely, that fanaticism is more pernicious than atheism; and this is not to be disputed: but he neglected to observe, what is nevertheless true, that fanaticism, though sanguinary and cruel, is a great and animating passion, that it elevates the heart of man, and makes him look down with contempt on death; that it is a prodigious spring of action, and requires only to be duly regulated in order to produce the most sublime virtues; whereas on the contrary, irreligion and a philosophical spirit in general, attaches us to life, enervates and debases the soul, concentrating all our passions in self-interest; and thus sapping by degrees the foundations of society. If atheism be less sanguinary, it is less out of love to peace than from an indifference to virtue: let the world go how it will, it little concerns these pretended sages, provided they can loll at ease in their closets. Their principles do not excite them to slaughter, but they prevent them from adding to their number, by corrupting the manners which tend to their

increase; by detaching themselves from their species, and reducing all their affections to a selfish egotism, as fatal to population as to virtue. The indifference of a philosopher resembles the tranquillity of a state, under a despotic government; it is the tranquillity of death, and more destructive than war itself. Thus fanaticism, though more fatal in its immediate effects, than what is called the philosophic spirit of the age, is much less so in its remoter consequences.

‘Philosophy, on its own principles, cannot be productive of any virtue, which does not flow from religion, and religion is productive of many virtues, to which philosophy is a stranger. As to the practice it is another thing, and remains to be examined. There is no man who practises in every particular the duties of his religion, when he has one, that is true: the greater part of mankind have hardly any religion at all, and practise nothing of what little they have; this also is very true: but after all, some have religion, and practise it at least in part; and it is incontestible, that motives of religion prevent them often from falling into vice, and excite to virtuous and commendable actions, which they had not performed but for such motives. Let a priest be guilty of a breach of trust; what does this prove but that a blockhead had confided in him? If Pascal himself had done it, this would have proved Pascal an hypocrite; but nothing more.—But a priest! Well, and what then? Are those who make a traffic, the truly religious? The crimes of the clergy by no means prove that religion is useless, but that few persons are religious.

“Modern governments are undoubtedly indebted to christianity for their most solid authority, and the rarity of revolutions ; it has even rendered them less sanguinary ; this is proved by comparing them with the ancient governments. Religion better understood, hath by banishing fanaticism given a great mildness to christian manners. This alteration is not the effect of letters, for we do not find that wherever literature hath flourished, humanity hath been at all times the more respected ; the cruelty of the Athenians, the Egyptians, the Roman emperors, and the Chinese, are evidences of this. On the other hand, what deeds of charity and mercy have been effected by the gospel ! how many restitutions and reparations hath not the practice of confessions brought about among the Catholics ? Among us how many reconciliations are effected, how many alms are distributed before approaching communion ? Among the Jews, avarice let go its hold, and misery was banished from among them on the approach of their jubilee. Not a beggar was to be seen in their streets, as there is not among the Turks, whose charitable foundations are innumerable. By the principles of their religion they are taught to be hospitable even to the enemies of it. Charadin tells us, that the Mahometans imagine there is a bridge, which they call Poul-Serrho, thrown over the flames of hell, which they are to pass at the general resurrection ; and this they cannot do until they have repaired the injuries they have committed. Can I conceive that this bridge, which is to repair so many iniquities.

does not actually prevent some? Suppose we were to deprive the Persians of this idea, by persuading them there is no such thing as their Poul-Serrho, nor any thing like it, where the oppressed shall be avenged on their oppressors after death; is it not clear that the latter would be very much at their ease, and would be freed from their trouble of appeasing the former? It is therefore false, that this doctrine is not hurtful; and therefore it cannot be true.

“Your moral precepts, my philosophers, are very fine; but pray let me know what sanction you have for them. Forbear a moment to wander from the point, and tell me plainly what you substitute in the place of the Poul-Serrho.”

Although Rousseau in this note allows Bayle's assertions to be true, yet I think it is evident that in his reasoning on it he has refuted it: and it should be remarked, that this author was only acquainted with a few philosophical atheists who speculated in their closets. What would he have said had he lived to see those opinions taught to the vulgar, and some of those philosophers guilty of the most horrid crimes?

From the examples that we have seen in France we should use much caution, even in laudable attempts to eradicate fanatical or superstitious notions from the minds of the common people. Amongst Mr. Wesley's people there are no doubt some very sensible men; that this should be the case with the bulk of them is not to be expected. It is obvious that neither themselves nor their creed could be corrected or reformed by the method I took; they were more likely to be induced

to renounce religion altogether. On that account also, I am not satisfied with my conduct toward them; but I will conclude this and resume the subject in my next.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

LETTER XX.

"By hope affected, virtue keeps the road

"That leads to heaven, and gains the blissful port.

"On his support the wretched still rely,

"Live on his words, and catch the balmy gale;

"While sweet religion points the weary eye

"To peace beyond this mortal vale."

DEAR FRIEND,

HAD not my last been so long, I should have added a curious passage from the notes to Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon, preached at Christ Church, upon Easter Tuesday, April 15, 1800. You know that Plutarch, Bacon, and other great and little men have said, that superstition is worse than atheism. I repeated their words in my *Memoirs*; but although we knew the effects of superstition, we were, until lately, ignorant of the full effects of atheism. As the subject is somewhat connected with that of my preceding letter, I will transcribe the passage.

'What. I would ask, (says the Doctor) are the general effects of superstition and atheism upon

e happiness and the conduct of mankind? Superstition it is granted, has many direct sorrows; but atheism, no direct joys. Superstition admits fear, mingled with hope; but atheism, while it excludes hope, affords a very imperfect security against fear. Superstition is never exposed to the dreary vacuity in the soul, over which atheism is wont to brood in solitude and silence; but atheism is sometimes haunted by forebodings scarcely less confused, or less unquiet, than those by which superstition is annoyed. Superstition stands aghast at the punishments reserved for wicked men in another state; but atheism cannot disprove the *possibility* of such a state to all men; accompanied by consciousness, and fraught with evils equally dreadful in degree and duration, with those punishments. Superstition has often preserved men from crimes; but atheism tends to protect them from weakness only. Superstition imposes fresh restraints upon the sensual appetites, though it may often let loose the malignant passions; but atheism takes away many restraints from those appetites, without throwing equal checks upon those passions, under many circumstances which may excite them in the minds of its votaries. Superstition is eager from a vicious excess of credulity; but atheism is often obstinate from an excess of incredulity, equally vicious. Superstition is sometimes docile from conscious weakness; but atheism is always haughty, from real or supposed strength. Superstition errs, and perverts only in consequence of error; but atheism rejects, and for the most part, disdains

to examine after rejection. Superstition catches at appearances ; but atheism starts back from realities. Superstition may, in a favourable moment, be awakened to the call of truth ; but atheism is generally deaf to the voice of that charmer's charm she never so wisely.'

Further on the Doctor says,

' We may without the imputation of folly venture to ask, whether the arguments against atheism be such as usually produce a steady *assent* and to warrant an unlimited assiance? Without the imputation of perverseness, we may not be in haste to apply to the judgment of every atheist, what Taylor eloquently says of the will, that like the magnetic needle, "it was full of trembling and uncertainty, ere it became fixed at its beloved point, wavering at first, because at first it doubted, and then was at rest, because it could doubt no more." After reaching that state of rest, atheism may have the credit of rescuing a man from the agitations of delusive hopes, and the torments of groundless fears. But may it not destroy at the same time other fears, which are very salutary in checking our fantastic desires, and calming our turbulent resentments and may it not extinguish other hopes too, which seem *necessary* to support the bulk of mankind in their passage through this vale of tears.'

An atheist can never enjoy such happy moments as the following lines describe.

Calm as the stillness which succeeds a storm,
Soft as the spring-tide in its milder form,
When every bud, and every opening flower

Exhales fresh sweetness from the vernal shower ;
 So still, so calm, so tranquilliz'd the breast,
 When all the fiend-like passions are at rest,
 When Grace and Nature's jarring discord cease,
 And conscience whispers, all within is peace.

Thoughts on Happiness.

It is certainly possible even for a fanatic, or a superstitious person to experience such a charming state of mind at times : but it is not possible that an atheist ever should.

In every edition of my Memoirs, is the following passage,

'I have been often asked if I did not believe, or rather know, that the Methodists were a vile set of hypocrites altogether? My reply has been uniformly in the negative. I am certain that they are not in general so: the greatest part of them indeed are very ignorant, (which is the case of enthusiasts of every religion ;) but I believe that a very considerable number of the Methodists are a sincere, honest, and friendly people. In Justice to those of that description, it may not be amiss to observe, that many artful, sly, designing persons, have noticed their character, connection, &c. and knowing that a religious person is in general supposed to be honest and conscientious, have been induced to join their societies, and by assuming an appearance of extraordinary sanctity, have the better been enabled to cheat and defraud such as were not guarded against their hypocritical wiles.'

If at a time when I had shaken hands with christianity and parted, I was obliged in con-

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An atheist can never enjoy such ha
ments as the following lines describe.

*Calm is the stillness which succeeds a storm
milder form,
evening flower*

1. The first step in the process is to identify the problem or issue that needs to be addressed. This involves gathering information and understanding the context of the problem.

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THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS FOR THE RECORD:
ON JANUARY 1, 1941, THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
WAS A NEUTRAL COUNTRY. IT WAS NOT INVOLVED IN
THE EUROPEAN WAR. IT WAS NOT A Belligerent
COUNTRY. IT WAS NOT A PARTY TO THE WAR.
IT WAS NOT A Belligerent COUNTRY.
IT WAS NOT A PARTY TO THE WAR.
IT WAS NOT A Belligerent COUNTRY.
IT WAS NOT A PARTY TO THE WAR.

...the men failed to turn their backs
on the enemy in appearance of extra-
ordinary courage. They had been crushed
and returned such as were not granted
their individual wishes.

time when I had shaken hands with him and parted. I was obliged to

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science to assert, that they were in general honest, friendly and sincere; you may easily suppose that I am not now pleased with my attempt to render them ridiculous, as I learn by so doing. I have in some measure been aiding the cause of infidelity. And perhaps what I have said might also have tended to encourage some hardened and impenitent sinners, who are ever ready to apply what might be said in a light, trifling way against fanaticism or superstition to any degree of religious worship or conduct that is beyond the ordinary custom of the world.

I also think that I should not have endeavoured to render the whole of those people ridiculous, and by so doing I have grieved many who are sincerely worshipping God, and, as they think, in the best way and manner it is possible to worship him.

It must be acknowledged that they have been the means of reclaiming and civilizing many ignorant, hardened, and notorious wretches, in whom it were hard to say whether the devil or the brute were most predominant; yet such as these have by them been induced ever after to live pious, sober, industrious members of society.

I must also observe, that when we see so much coldness and indifference towards religion and religious duties; when so many seem to think that if our brethren sleep they do well; it was not time, at least for me, to be declaiming so much against enthusiasm. I must conclude this, and finish the subject in my next.

I am,

Dear friend, your's

LETTER XXI.

Th' insidious sland'ring thief is worse
Than the poor rogue who steals your purse.

COTTON.

DEAR FRIEND,

I AM also sorry that in my Memoirs I inserted two letters said to be written by Mr. Wesley, When I inserted them, I informed my readers that I copied them from a pamphlet, entitled "A Letter to the Rev. T. Coke, L. L. D. and Mr. Moore, by an old Member (of Mr. Wesley's Society.) I was induced to believe those letters to be genuine, partly by their bearing some resemblance to Mr. Wesley's stile and manner, but more so from the notice which was printed at the end of the second letter, and is as follows :

Should any one entertain a doubt concerning the foregoing letters being written by Mr. Wesley, the author can produce the originals, for the satisfaction of such, if they will take the trouble to call on the publisher, who has his address, and will refer them to him.

When I transcribed these letters from the above pamphlet, the third edition of my Memoirs was in the press ; and as the printer was nearly come to the part where I wished them to be introduced, I sent the copy off in a hurry, and then set off to my house at Merton.

Some time after these extraordinary letters had been printed in my Memoirs, I was not quite satisfied that I had omitted to see the originals.

M

Upon which I sent my head shopman, with my compliments to the author of the pamphlet, and requested a sight of those original letters ; but, instead of complying with my request, he returned for answer, *that he had returned the letters to the persons to whom they were written.*

When I found that he could not, or would not produce the originals, I was more dissatisfied with myself for having inserted them in my Memoirs.

In all subsequent editions of those Memoirs, I should have left them out ; but after they had found a place there, had they been omitted, I thought my readers might be displeased, and think that I had not done right in omitting them ; others that never saw the pamphlet from whence I informed my readers I had transcribed them, might think they were fabricated by me, and that I had from conscious guilt left them out. Upon the whole, I thought it best not to omit them ; so that they are to be found in about twelve thousand copies of the memoirs of my life.

I have ever, in subsequent editions, informed my readers that I could not be certain as to their authenticity, as I had sent to the author and requested a sight of the originals, and that he had returned the above answer. I also shewed the pamphlet from whence I transcribed them to all that desired to see it ; and I still keep it by me. It was printed for J. Luffman, Alfred-buildings, Windmill-street, Moorfields ; H. D. Symons, No. 20 Paternoster-row ; J Phillips, No. 27 City-road ; and J Cottle, Bristol.

Supposing Mr. Wesley to be the author of the first of these letters, he could not have been an honest man, or sincere in what he professed to believe, as I ever believed him to be until I saw that letter. Even while I was an infidel I respected him so much for these qualities, and his unwearied disinterested labours, in what he believed to be the cause of God and the good of mankind, that it always gave me pleasure to see him pass by my shop. After I had seen those letters I was often in doubt as to his real character. When I reflected on his primitive manner of living, his sufferings, his unparalleled labours for more than sixty years together, &c. I could hardly think it possible for a human being to be for such a length of time, and in such a manner, only acting a feigned part; for had he been the author of the first letter, he must have been a hypocrite, or a free-thinker, or both.

It is a horrid crime to misrepresent and blacken any person's character.

——“ The dark villain who shall aim
 “ To blast a fair and spotless name,
 “ He steals a precious gem away,
 “ Steals what both Indies can't repay.”

It was still worse to blacken such a person as every pious man must acknowledge Mr. Wesley to have been. Notwithstanding (what I conceive to be) all his enthusiasm and wrong opinions, he certainly was a venerable character who served his God and the King faithfully.

Being much dissatisfied with myself for insert-

ing these Letters in my Life, lest by this means I should have (although unintentionally) helped to spread abroad a false opinion of a good man, I sent for Dr. Whitehead's life of Mr. J. Wesley, and by the Doctor's account of his death, I am fully convinced that his life was uniformly consistent with the opinion which I had formed of his character ; and whoever will take the trouble to look over that part of the work will, with me, be convinced that those two letters which are ascribed to him, were fabricated to answer some base purpose.

Tread on his ashes still, ye ruffians, tread ;
 By venal lies defame the sacred dead ;
 With Satan still your feeble malice show,
 The last poor efforts of a vanquish'd foe ;
 T' arraign a saint deceas'd profanely dare,
 But look to meet him at the last great bar,
 And horribly recant your hellish slander there. }
Elegy on R. Jones, Esq.

I will transcribe the account of his death, vol. ii. page 454. Tuesday, March 1, 1791, " In the forenoon he said, ' I will get up.' While they were preparing his clothes, he broke out in a manner that astonished all who were about him, in singing.

" I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,
 And when my voice is lost in death,
 Praise shall employ my nobler powers :
 My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
 While life, and thought, and being last,
 Or immortality endures !"

“ Having got him into his chair, they observed him change for death. But he, regardless of his dying body, said with a weak voice, ‘ Lord, Thou givest strength to those who can speak, and those who cannot. Speak, Lord, to all our hearts, and let them know that thou loosest tongues.’ He then sung,

“ To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
 “ Who sweetly all agree”—

“ Here his voice failed. After gasping for breath, he said, ‘ Now we have done all.’ He was then laid on the bed, from whence he rose no more. After resting a little, he called to those who were with him, ‘ To pray and praise.’ Soon after he said, ‘ Let me be buried in nothing but what is woollen ; and let my corpse be carried in my coffin, into the chapel.’ And again called upon them to ‘ pray and praise ;’ and taking each by the hand, and affectionately saluting them, bade them farewell. Attempting afterwards to say something, which they could not understand, he paused a little, and then, with all the remaining strength he had, said, ‘ The best of all is, God is with us.’ Again, lifting his hand, he repeated the same words in a holy triumph, ‘ The best of all is, God is with us.’ Something being given him to moisten his lips, he said, ‘ It will not do ; we must take the consequence. Never mind the poor carcase.’ Being told that his brother’s widow was come, he said, ‘ He giveth his servants rest ;’ thanked her as she pressed his hand ; and affectionately endeavoured to kiss her. His lips

being again wet, he repeated his usual grace after a meal; We thank thee, O Lord, for these and all thy mercies: bless the church and king; grant us truth and peace, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord.' After some pause, he said, 'The clouds drop fatness. The Lord is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge.' He again called them to prayer, and appeared fervently to join in their petitions.

"Most of the following night he often attempted to repeat the psalm before mentioned; but could only get out, 'I'll praise.'—'I'll praise.' On Wednesday morning his end drew near. Mr. Bradford, his old and faithful friend, who, with the affection of a son, had attended him many years, now prayed with him; and the last word he was heard to articulate was 'farewell.'

"A few minutes before ten, on the second day of March, while a number of his friends were kneeling round his bed, died Mr. *John Wesley*, without a groan. He was in the eighty-eighth year of his age; had been sixty-five years in the ministry; and the preceding pages will be a lasting memorial of his uncommon zeal, diligence, and usefulness in his Master's work, for more than half a century. His death was an admirable close of so laborious and useful a life."

In reviewing Mr. Wesley's character, Dr. Whitehead quotes (page 469) what Dr. Johnson said of him, viz. "Mr. Wesley's conversation is good; he talks well on any subject; I could converse with him all night." Page 472, "His (Mr. Wesley's) liberality to the poor knew no bounds, but an empty pocket. He gave away, not merely

a certain part of his income, but all he had ; his own wants provided for, he devoted all the rest to the necessities of others. He entered upon this good work at an early period We are told when he had thirty pounds a year, he lived on twenty-eight, and gave away forty shillings. The next year receiving sixty pounds, he still lived on twenty-eight, and gave away two-and-thirty. The third he received ninety pounds, and gave away sixty-two. The fourth year he received one hundred and twenty pounds, still he lived on twenty-eight, and gave to the poor ninety-two." In this ratio he proceeded during the rest of his life ; and in the course of fifty years, it has been supposed he gave away between twenty and thirty thousand pounds.

I have said before in my Memoirs, that he left behind him, at his death, 4*l.* 10*s.*

I am,

Dear friend,

Yours.



LETTER XXII.

With eloquence innate his tongue was arm'd :
 Tho' harsh the precept, yet the preacher charm'd.
 For letting down the golden chain from high,
 He drew his audience upward to the sky.
 He bore his great commission in his look ;
 Yet sweetly temper'd awe ; and soft'ned all he spoke.

He preach'd the joys of heav'n, and pains of hell;
 And warn'd the sinner with becoming zeal :
 But on eternal mercy lov'd to dwell,
 His preaching much, but more his practice wrought;
 (A living sermon of the truths he taught ;)
 For this by rules severe his life he squar'd,
 That all might see the doctrines which they heard ;
 For priests, he said, are patterns for the rest :
 (The gold of heav'n bears the God impress'd)
 But when the precious coin is kept unclean,
 The Sovereign's image is no longer seen.
 If they be foul, on whom the people trust
 Well may the baser brass contract a rust.
 Ever at hand was he without request,
 To serve the sick, to succour the distress'd :
 Tempting on foot alone, without affright
 The dangers of a dark tempestuous night.
 Such was the saint ; who shone with every grace,
 Reflecting, Moses-like, his Maker's face.
 God saw his image lively was express'd ;
 And his new work, as in creation, bless'd.

DRYDEN'S GOOD PARSON.

DEAR FRIEND,

I hope you will excuse me if I give you one letter more on Mr. Wesley, as I think that such an extraordinary person must be interesting to every curious observer of human nature ; and having been misled and deceived myself to the prejudice of his real character, I am the more interested in what concerns him.

Page 477, Dr Whitehead says, " I shall finish this review of Mr. Wesley's character, with two or three sketches of it drawn up by different persons." Now that Mr. John Wesley has finished his course upon earth, I may be allowed to estimate his character, and the loss the world has

sustained by his death. Upon a fair account, it appears to be such, as not only annihilates all the reproaches that have been cast upon him; but such as does honour to mankind, at the same time that it reproaches them. His natural and acquired abilities, were both of the highest rank. His apprehension was lively and distinct; his learning extensive. His judgment, though not infallible, in most cases excellent. His mind was steadfast and resolved. His elocution was ready and clear, graceful and easy, accurate and unaffected. As a writer, his style, though unstudied and flowing with natural ease, yet for accuracy and perspicuity, was such as may vie with the best writers in the *English* language. Though his temper was naturally warm, his manners were gentle, simple and uniform. Never were such happy talents better seconded by an unrelenting perseverance in those courses, which singular endowments, and his zealous love to the interests of mankind marked for him. His constitution was excellent; and never was a constitution less abused, less spared, or more excellently applied, in an exact subservience to the faculties of his mind. His labours and studies were wonderful. The latter were not confined to theology only, but extended to every subject that tended, either to the improvement, or the rational entertainment of the mind.

If we consider the reading he discovered by himself, his writing, and his other labours by themselves, any one of them will appear sufficient to have kept a person of ordinary application, busy during the whole of his life. In short, the tran-

sactions of his life could never have been performed, without the utmost exertion of two qualities ; which depended not upon his capacity, but on the uniform steadfastness of his resolutions. These were inflexible temperance, and unexampled economy of time. In these he was a pattern to the age he lived in ; and an example, to what a surprizing extent a man may render himself useful in his generation, by temperance and punctuality. His friends and followers have no reason to be ashamed of the name of *Methodist* he has entailed upon them : as, for an uninterrupted course of years, he has given the world an instance of the possibility of living without wasting a single hour, and of the advantage of a regular distribution of time, in discharging the important duties and purposes of life. Few ages have more needed such a public testimony of the value of time ; and perhaps none have had a more conspicuous example of the perfection, to which the improvement of it may be carried.

“ As a minister his labours were unparalleled, and such as nothing could have supported him under, but the warmest zeal for the doctrine he taught, and for the eternal interests of mankind. He studied to be gentle, yet vigilant and faithful towards all. He possessed himself in patience, and preserved himself unprovoked, nay, even unruffled in the midst of persecution, reproach, and all manner of abuse, both to his person and name. But let his works praise him. He now enjoys the fruits of his labours, and that praise which he sought, not of men, but of God.

"To finish the portrait. Examine the tenor of his life, and it will be found self-evidently inconsistent with his being a slave to any one passion or pursuit, that can fix a blemish on his character. Of what use were the accumulations of wealth to him, who, through his whole course, never allowed himself to taste the repose of indolence, or even of the common indulgence in the use of the necessaries of life. Free from the partiality of any party, the sketcher of this excellent character, with a friendly tear, pays it as a just tribute to the memory of so great and good a man, who when alive was his friend."

Page 479, Dr. Whitehead says, "The following, so far as it goes, is an accurate and beautiful picture of this extraordinary man."

"Very lately, I had an opportunity, for some days together, of observing Mr. *Wesley* with attention. I endeavoured to consider him, not so much with the eye of a friend, as with the impartiality of a philosopher; and I must declare, every hour I spent in his company, afforded me fresh reasons for esteem and veneration. So fine an old man I never saw. The happiness of his mind, beamed forth in his countenance. Every look shewed how fully he enjoyed 'The gay remembrance of a life well spent:' and wherever he went, he diffused a portion of his own felicity. Easy and affable in his demeanour, he accommodated himself to every sort of company, and shewed how happily the most finished courtesy may be blended with the most perfect piety. In his conversation, we might be at a loss whether to

admire most his fine classical taste, his extensive knowledge of men and things, or his overflowing goodness of heart. While the grave and serious were charmed with his wisdom, his sportive sallies of innocent mirth delighted even the young and thoughtless; both saw in his uninterrupted cheerfulness, the excellency of true religion. No cynical remarks on the levity of youth, embittered his discourses: no applausive retrospect to past times, marked his present discontent. In him, even old age appeared delightful, like an evening without a cloud; and it was impossible to observe him without wishing fervently, 'may my latter end be like his!'

"I find myself unequal to the task of delineating such a character. What I have said, may to some appear as panegyric; but there are numbers, and those of taste and discernment too, who can bear witness to the truth, though by no means to the perfectness of the sketch I have attempted. With such I have been frequently in company; and every one of them, I am persuaded, would subscribe to all I have said. For my own part, I never was so happy as while with him, and scarcely ever felt more poignant regret than at parting with him; for well I knew, 'I ne'er should look upon his like again.'

I cannot forbear giving a part of another portrait which Dr. Whitehead has introduced in his work.

"His indefatigable zeal in the discharge of his duty, has long been witnessed by the world; but, as mankind are not always inclined to put a generous construction on the exertion of singular ta-

lepts, his motives were imputed to the love of popularity, ambition, and lucre. It now appears he was actuated by a disinterested regard to the immortal interest of mankind. He laboured, and studied, and preached, and wrote, to propagate, what he believed to be the gospel of *Christ*. The intervals of those engagements were employed in governing and regulating the concerns of his numerous societies; assisting the necessities, solving the difficulties, and soothing the afflictions of his hearers. He observed so rigid a temperance, and allowed himself so little repose, that he seemed to be above the infirmities of nature, and to act independently of the earthly tenement he occupied.

“The recital of the occurrences of every day of his life would be the greatest encomium.

“Had he loved wealth, he might have accumulated without bounds. Had he been fond of power, his influence would have been worth courting by any party. I do not say he was without ambition; he had *that* which *Christianity* need not blush at, and which virtue is proud to confess. I do not mean that which is grafted on splendour and large possessions; but that which commands the hearts and affections, the homage and gratitude, of thousands. For him they felt sentiments of veneration, only inferior to those they pay to heaven: to him they looked as their father, their benefactor, their guide to glory and immortality: for him they fell prostrate before God, with prayers and tears, to spare his doom, and prolong his stay. Such a recompence, as this is sufficient to repay the toil of the longest life. Short of *this*,

greatness is contemptible impotence. Before this, lofty prelates bow, and princes hide their diminished heads.

“ His zeal was not a transient blaze, but a steady and constant flame. The ardor of his spirit was neither damped by difficulty, nor subdued by age. This was ascribed by himself, to the power of Divine grace ; by the world to *enthusiasm*. Be it what it will, it is what philosophers must envy, and infidels respect ; it is that which gives energy to the soul, and without which there can be no greatness or heroism.

“ Why should we condemn that in religion, which we applaud in every other profession or pursuit? He had a vigour and elevation of mind, which nothing but the belief of the Divine favour and presence could inspire. This threw a lustre round his infirmities, changed his bed of sickness into a triumphal car, and made his *exit* an *apostrophe* rather than a dissolution.

“ He was qualified in every branch of literature: he was well versed in the learned tongues, in *Metaphysics*, in Oratory, in Logic, in Criticism, and every requisite of a *Christian* minister. His style was nervous, clear, and manly ; his preaching was pathetic and persuasive ; his Journals are artless and interesting ; and his compositions and compilations to promote knowledge and piety, were almost innumerable.

“ I do not say he was without faults, or above mistakes ; but they were lost in the multitude of his excellencies and virtues.

“ The great purpose of his life was doing good : for this he relinquished all honor and preferment ;

to this he dedicated all the powers of body and mind ; at all times and in all places, in season and out of season, by gentleness, by terror, by argument, by persuasion, by reason, by interest, by every motive and every inducement, he strove with unwearied assiduity, to turn men from the error of their ways, and awaken them to virtue and religion. To the bed of sickness, or the couch of prosperity ; to the prison, the hospital, the house of mourning, or the house of feasting, wherever there was a friend to serve, or a soul to save, he readily repaired ; to administer assistance or advice, reproof or consolation. He thought no office too humiliating, no condescension too low, no undertaking too arduous, to reclaim the meanest of God's offspring. The souls of all men were equally precious in his sight, and the value of an immortal creature beyond all estimation. He penetrated the abodes of wretchedness and ignorance, to rescue the profligate from perdition ; and he communicated the light of life to those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. He changed the outcasts of society, into useful members ; and civilized even savages, and filled those lips with prayer and praise, that had been accustomed only to oaths and imprecations. But as the strongest religious impressions are apt to become languid without discipline and practice, he divided his people into classes and bands, according to their attainments. He appointed frequent meetings for prayer and conversation, where they gave an account of their experience, their hopes and fears, their joys and troubles ; by which means they were united to each other, and to their com-

mon profession? They became sentinels upon each other's conduct, and securities for each other's character. Thus the seeds he sowed sprang up and flourished, bearing the rich fruits of every grace and virtue. Thus he governed and preserved his numerous societies, watching their improvement with a paternal care, and encouraged them to be faithful to the end."

Page 484. "The figure of Mr. Wesley was remarkable. His stature was low; his habit of body in every period of life, the reverse of corpulent, and expressive of strict temperance, and continual exercise; and notwithstanding his small size, his step was firm, and his appearance, till within a few years of his death, vigorous and muscular. His face, for an old man, was one of the finest we have seen. A clear, smooth forehead; an aquiline nose, an eye the brightest and most piercing that can be conceived, and a freshness of complexion scarcely ever to be found at his years, and impressive of the most perfect health, conspired to render him a venerable and interesting figure. Few have seen him without being struck with his appearance: and many, who had been greatly prejudiced against him, have been known to change their opinion, the moment they were introduced into his presence. In his countenance and demeanor, there was a cheerfulness mingled with gravity; a sprightliness, which was the natural result of an unusual flow of spirits, and yet was accompanied with every mark of the most serene tranquillity. His aspect, particularly his profile,

had a strong character of accuteness and penetration.

“ In his dress, he was a pattern of neatness and simplicity. A narrow, plaited stock, a coat with a small upright collar, no buckles at his knees, no silk or velvet in any part of his apparel, and a head as white as snow gave an idea of something primitive and apostolic : while an air of neatness and cleanliness was diffused over his whole person.”

Perhaps I cannot conclude this letter better than with the following lines :

A dying saint can true believers mourn ?
 Joyful they see their friend to heaven return :
 His animating words their souls inspire,
 And bear them upwards on his car of fire :
 His looks, when language fails, new life impart,
 Heaven in his looks and Jesus in his heart ;
 He feels the happiness that cannot fade,
 With everlasting joy upon his head,
 Starts from the flesh, and gains his native skies ;
 Glory to God on high !---the Christian dies !
 Dies from the world, and quits his earthly clod :
 Dies, and receives the crown by Christ bestow'd,
 Dies into all the life and plenitude of God. }

WESLEY.

LETTER XXIII.

Lord ! I take thee at thy word,

My wickedness I mourn ;

Unto thee, my bleeding Lord,

However late, I turn ;

Yes : I yield, I yield at last,

Listen to thy speaking blood,

Me, with all my sins I cast

On my atoning God.

DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE lately, on more than one occasion, been obliged to subscribe to the truth of the words of Christ. *If any man will do the will of my Father, he shall know of the doctrine which I teach whether it be of God.* I am more than ever convinced, that if we do not love darkness rather than light, this light will shine more and more on our minds, and dispel the mists and darkness in which we are by nature and sin enveloped, and that the perfect day will at last burst forth on our souls ; and then it is that we understand the meaning of these words, *In my light ye shall see light.* I have before, in part, informed you, that for some time past I have been made willing, and very desirous of not only knowing the will of God, but also of doing it. And by the grace of God I have also, for some time, been able to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this sinful world, regardless of the sneers, laughs and jokes of my thoughtless acquaintance. In proportion as the concern for my own salvation sunk deeper in my mind, the more was I affected in reflecting on the

condition of my fellow creatures around me : the following lines have often been mournfully repeated by me :

Ye simple souls that stray,
 Far from the path of peace,
 (That lonely, unrequented way)
 To life and happiness.
 Why will ye folly love,
 And throng the downward road,
 And hate the wisdom from above,
 And mock the sons of God !

About twelve months since I sent for some cheap religious books, viz. The whole Duty of Man, the Great Importance of a religious life, Baxter's Call to the Unconverted, Brown's History and Doctrine of the New Testament, Gilpin's Lives of Truman, Atkins and Baker, and various others ; some of which I gave away, others I left at a poor man's house to be by him lent to such of the farmers, or poor people, as would read them. And I had reason to think that some little good was done, by thus giving them an opportunity of reading without any expence.

To some young men who I thought would not read religious books, I lent Robinson Crusoe's Adventures, and some other moral and entertaining works ; in order to employ them in the winter evenings, and by this means prevent them from spending their evenings in bad company. For young women I got Susan Gray, The Workhouse, &c. I also got many of a cheap edition of Addison's Evidences of the Christian Religion,

and some of Watson's Apology for the Bible, in Letters to T. Paine ; these I put into the hands of freethinkers ; and I believe they made some impression on their minds. I now saw that it was my duty, when opportunity offered, to point out the dreadful consequences of persisting in a wicked course of life, and of neglecting eternal concerns ; and I perceived that those reproofs, and serious observations, made some little alteration in the conduct of several.

Last summer, being in Taunton, at the house of Mr. J. Smith, brother to my first wife, his son brought in a parcel of those religious tracts which are published by the Religious Tract Society, and sold cheap by T. Williams, Stationer's-court, Ludgate-street, London. I had heard before that there was such a society established, but knew not where their tracts could be had ; nor did I know that they were such as were proper to be put into the hands of the poor ; so that I was much pleased with an opportunity of procuring some of them. I took one of each of more than thirty sorts ; and when I got home, Mrs. L. and I read them over together, in order to know if they were proper to be dispersed abroad, and whether they were calculated to do good to such as should read them. In going through these pamphlets, I found that although the compilers had carefully avoided a party spirit, and appeared to be influenced by a love to their fellow-creatures, and a desire to promote the interest of religion in general, more than that of any sect or party in particular ; yet I thought that in several of them inward religion was too much insisted upon. Although I looked upon myself as a member of the church of Eng-

and, yet I did not approve of that tract entitled, *The Good Old Way, or the Religion of our Forefathers, as explained in the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies of the Church of England; briefly displaying Man's Ruin by Sin; his Recovery effected by Christ; and his Gratitude, expressed by obedience.* Over the title of this I wrote, 'methodistical,' and would not send for one of them; on several others I wrote, 'rather methodistical,' and of such I sent but for a few, and those I intended for some of the most ignorant and the most hardened; for I was not so much prejudiced against the Methodists as to wish my fellow-creatures to live in sin and ignorance rather than become Methodists, but could have been heartily glad to have seen the bulk of mankind turn Methodists, rather than continue to live as though they were not accountable creatures,—as though there was no future state, in which the wicked will be punished, and the righteous rewarded; or, in other words, where every man shall receive according as his works have been, whether good or bad." Still I was not thoroughly sensible of man's utter inability to do any thing of himself towards his acceptance with God; that salvation is by grace, and justification by faith in the blood of Christ; of having peace with God, and an assurance of his pardoning mercy; and the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. These were subjects that did not much please me. I did not at this time deny that a very few of the highly favoured people of God might, possibly, be blessed with the knowledge of their being reconciled to God; but as to its being the common

privilege of real believers, was what I could not believe.

The reading of those tracts increased the serious impressions which had been made before on my mind ; and as I thought that most of them were, upon the whole, well calculated to awaken my poor neighbours in the villages around, to a sense of their wicked way of life, I sent for about three thousand of them, and many of them I have already given away to the farmers, labourers, soldiers, &c. The more I employed my time and money in attempts to be serviceable to the souls and bodies of my fellow creatures, the more I was disposed towards religious duties, and enabled to enter into the spirit of religion, and I wished for the mind that was in Christ with some degree of ardor. Mrs. L. also partook much of the same disposition ; so that no books now pleased us so well as those that treated of divine subjects. We had, some time before this, given up novels, romances, and books of a trifling nature. Now we even neglected history, voyages and travels, &c. not that we thought it wrong to read them, but because we found more pleasure and satisfaction while engaged with those that treated of divine truths and religious duties. We were sensible that we wanted continually to be put in mind of what we owed to God and our neighbour.

In a former letter I told you that I sent for Mr. Wesley's Life ; but I did not inform you of some particulars relating to that circumstance. About a year ago, a respectable clergyman frequently called on me, and I told him that I was sorry that

I had inserted in my Memoirs the two letters that were ascribed to Mr. Wesley. He joined with me in wishing that I had not been so imposed upon. Not long after this he brought from Bristol Dr. Whitehead's Life of Mr. Wesley, 2 vols. 8 vo. I having expressed a wish to see in what state of mind Mr. Wesley died. After having satisfied myself on that head, I returned the set of books as I had no intention to read any more of the work, but the account of his death. In Spring last, I wished again to see the account of his death, and I sent to the Temple of the Muses for the work; and after I had again read the account of his death, and his character, as drawn by several hands, and transcribed them as in two former letters you have seen, I put by the set of books, having no inclination to be made acquainted with his ministerial proceedings. But after having read such a number of tracts, as mentioned above, and various volumes in divinity, and much in the bible, I again took up Dr. Whitehead's Life of Mr. Wesley, and as I saw by the title page, that it contained an account of Mr. Wesley's ancestors and relations, the life of Mr. Charles Wesley, (whom I had often heard preach,) and a history of Methodism, I requested Mrs. L. to help me in reading it through.

To describe the conflict, and the different commotions which passed in my mind while we were reading this excellent work, is impossible. I have been instructed, delighted, much confounded, and troubled. That divine power which has been felt by thousands and tens of thousands under

the preaching of Mr. Wesley, his brother Charles, and others of his preachers, again humbled me in the dust. I sunk down at the feet of Christ, and washed them with my tears. Sorrow, joy and love, were sweetly mingled together in my soul. I, once more, after so many years, knew a little of what these lines express:

The godly grief, the pleasing smart,
 The meltings of a broken heart;
 The seeing eye, the feeling sense,
 The mystic joy of penitence,
 The guiltless shame, the sweet distress,
 The unutterable tenderness,
 The genuine, ~~meek~~ humility,
 The wonder, 'why such love to me ?'
 The o'erwhelming power of saving grace,
 The sight that veils the seraph's face,
 The speechless awe that dares not move,
 And all the silent heaven of love.

I was now convinced that the pardoning love of God, which forty years since was first manifested to my soul, was a divine reality, and not the effect of a heated imagination. Thousands, and tens of thousands, who are gone to glory, have borne testimony to the truth of this doctrine; and I learn that there are still tens of thousands of living witnesses to the same glorious truth, and can joyfully sing:

Thy mighty name salvation is,
 And keeps my happy soul above,
 Comfort it brings, and power and peace,

And everlasting love :

To me with thy dear name are given,
Pardon, and holiness, and heaven.

Jesus, my all in all thou art,

My rest in toil, my ease in pain,

The med'cine of my broken heart ;

In war my peace, in loss my gain,

My smile beneath the tyrant's frown,

In shame my glory and my crown.

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your's.

LETTER XXIV.

O ye cold-hearted, frozen, formalists !

On such a theme, 'tis impious to be calm ;

Passion is reason, transport temper, *here*.

Shall hear'n, which gave us ardor, and has shewn

Her own for man so strongly, not disdain

What smooth emollients in theology

Recumbent virtue's downy doctors preach,

That prose of piety, a lukewarm praise !

Rise odours sweet from *incense uninflam'd* ?

Devotion, when lukewarm, is underout ;

But when it glows, its heat is struck to heav'n ;

To human hearts the golden harps are strung ;

High heav'n's orchestra chaunts *amen* to man,

Talk they of morals ? O, thou *bleeding love* !

The grand morality is love of thee.

Thou most indulgent, most tremendous pow'r !

Still more tremendous for thy wondrous love !
 That arms, with awe more awful thy commands :
 And foul transgression dips in sev'nfold night ;
 How our hearts tremble at thy love immense !
 In love immense inviolably just !
 Thou, rather than thy justice should be stain'd,
 Didst stain the cross ; and work of wonders far
 The greatest ! that thy dearest far might bleed.

YOUNG.

DEAR FRIEND,

DIVINE truths now rush'd upon me like a
 flood, and swept away all objections. I

! Feel the *great truths*, which burst the tenfold night
 ' Of *heathen error*, with a golden flood
 ' Of endless day : To *feel*, is to be fir'd ;
 ' And to *believe*, LORENZO, is to feel.'

I am at last constrained to acknowledge, that
 the mighty power of God has been manifested
 from the beginning amongst the Methodists ; and
 that the same Almighty arm is still exerted in
 overturning the kingdom of darkness. Sinners
 are still brought from darkness to light ; and res-
 cued from the power of sin and Satan. God is
 still adding daily to his church such as shall be
 saved. It is built on a rock, the Rock of Ages ;
 nor have the powers of earth and hell been able to
 prevail against it.

' The Lord is King, and earth submits,
 ' Howe'er impatient of his sway ;
 ' Between the cherubim he sits,
 ' And makes his restless foes obey.

- ‘ All power is to our Jesus given ;
- ‘ O’er earth’s rebellious sons he reigns ;
- ‘ He mildly rules the hosts of heaven,
- ‘ And holds the powers of hell in chains.’

I now can scarcely think it possible for an unprejudiced person to read the Life of Mr. Wesley, and not acknowledge that the path he took, and ever after continued in, was pointed out by the finger of God. By going out into the streets, highways and hedges, and calling sinners to repentance, and preaching salvation by grace to a lost world, what countless numbers have thrown down the weapons of their rebellion, and enlisted under the banner of the cross. Sinners of every description have been compelled to come in. Old, daring, hardened sinners have been made humble and gentle as lambs. The wise, in the things of this world, have given up their wisdom, and have become teachable as little children. The self-righteous have been brought trembling to the foot of the cross, where they gladly accept of pardon and salvation as the free, unmerited gift of God through Christ ; and feelingly join in singing,

I the chief of sinners am ;
Yet Jesus died for me !

I am astonished that no more of those good, well-meaning ministers, (for many such there are, both in the church of England and also amongst the Dissenters,) who have a concern for the welfare of mankind, and would gladly turn sinners from the error of their ways, but yet from year to year, and even for ten, twenty, thirty, or

forty years together, keep on preaching without ever converting one soul to God, or even making any serious and lasting impressions on their congregations, are not convinced that there must be something materially defective in their ministrations. They see the drunkard still gets drunk; they hear the swearer blaspheme as much as ever; they see the sabbath-day still profaned; fornication and adultery are still practised; the unholy continues unholy still; parents still bring up their children in forgetfulness of their Creator, and the things of another world.

In short, when they die, they leave the poor creatures over whom they were overseers, in as bad, or worse state than they found them.

How is it that such men do not reflect, and see that something must be fatally wrong either in the matter or manner of their preaching?

These gentlemen will occasionally dwell on the inefficacy of moral philosophy to reform mankind. They will point out the deplorable state which the heathen world was in before Christ came. They will clearly prove that the doctrines taught by Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, and Epicuretus, did but very little towards the reformation of manners. They will also, sometimes, treat of the wonderful effects produced by preaching of Christ crucified; and some of those will preach sermons, where the name of Christ is not once introduced. They seem to have forgotten him: and Plato's Commonwealth, Plutarch's Morals, and Tully's Offices, are substituted for the New Testament. They forget . . .

—‘ *The great truths* which burst the tenfold night
 ‘ Of heathen error, with a golden flood
 ‘ Of endless day.’

‘ Talk they of morals ? Oh, thou bleeding love !
 ‘ The grand morality is love of thee. YOUNG.

“ It is said, that when Baxter first came to Kidderminster, he found it overrun with ignorance and profaneness. He found but a single house or two, that used daily family prayer in a whole street ; and, at his going away, but one family or two, could be found, in some streets, that continued in the neglect of it. And on the Lord’s day, instead of the open profanation to which they had been so long accustomed, a person in passing through the town, in the intervals of public worship, might overhear hundreds of families engaged in singing psalms, reading the scriptures, or other good books, or such sermons as they had taken down on hearing them delivered from the pulpit. The number of his stated communicants rose to six hundred ; of whom he himself declared, there were not twelve concerning whose sincere piety he had not reason to entertain good hopes. Blessed be God the religious spirit which was thus happily introduced, is yet to be traced in the town and neighbourhood, in some degree.”

The wonderful effects produced by the preaching, and other labours of the late Mr. Fletcher, at Madeley, are pretty well known. I wish every minister of the gospel would read his *Portrait of St. Paul*, as published by Mr. Gilpin. It is an excellent work. The various traits in St. Paul’s character are drawn in a masterly manner ; and

the traits that Mr. Gilpin has given us of the author, shews that the worth of immortal souls was deeply impressed on his heart. He took heed to himself and his doctrine, as one that was soon to appear before the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, to give an account of himself and those committed to his care.

Such as will read that work, and Dr. Whitehead's Life of Mr. Wesley, must learn that God is still with such as faithfully dispense his word, and boldly declare that there is no other name given under heaven whereby men can be saved; that other foundation can no man lay than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ. It was by thus preaching Christ, that three thousand were converted by one sermon preached by Peter.

‘ Jesus, the name high over all
 ‘ In hell, or earth, or sky !
 ‘ Angels and men before it fall,
 ‘ And devils fear and fly.

‘ Jesus, the name to sinners dear,
 ‘ The name to sinners given !
 ‘ It scatters all their guilty fear :
 ‘ It turns their hell to heaven.’

In Mr. Wesley's Life we learn, that plain men, without any pretension to learning or great talents, have, by preaching Christ crucified from a real heart-felt love to Christ, and to their fellow-creatures, seen their labours attended with the most wonderful effects; sinners have been first pricked to the heart, and after that have been enabled to believe to the salvation of their souls; and

have ever after lived so as to adorn the gospel of Christ in all things ; so that the world have taken knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. The life that they henceforth lived was by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them, and gave himself for them, to redeem them from this present evil world, and hereafter from the wrath of God, which is ready to be manifested against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

‘ Jesus the prisoner’s fetters breaks,
 ‘ And bruises Satan’s head ;
 ‘ Power into strengthless souls it speaks,
 ‘ And life into the dead.

‘ His only righteousness they shew,
 ‘ His saving faith proclaim ;
 ‘ ‘Tis all their business here below,
 ‘ To cry, Behold the Lamb !’

Thus does God by the foolishness of preaching save them that believe. By this “ foolish preaching,” as it is called by the world, the hearts and lives of thousands and tens of thousands have been totally changed ; drunkards became sober ; adulterers became chaste ; the covetous were made liberal ; the extravagant, careful ; and the most ignorant were made wise unto salvation, and able to give a rational account of the religion of Christ ; the brutish were civilized ; the passionate were made gentle ; the proud were made humble and meek ; the cruel and hard-hearted were made merciful and tender-hearted ; the unjust became just in all their dealings ; slanderers and backbiters were made partakers of that love

that thinketh no evil, hopeth all things believeth all things, and covereth a multitude of the sins of others; the selfish churl became friendly; liars spoke the truth; blasphemers became adorers of God; thieves provided things honest in the sight of all men; rebels became loyal, and prayed for the King and all in authority; smugglers, and their encouragers, learned to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; sabbath-breakers learned to spend the day in religious worship and pious exercises; the idle became industrious. In short, like the apostles, they turned the world upside down, knowledge arose out of ignorance, order out of confusion, light out of darkness, happiness out of misery, heaven out of hell.

Who can reflect on these wonderful changes without acknowledging that this must be the work of God? The powers of earth and hell have a thousand times been stirred up against this work in vain. The gates of hell have not been able to prevail against it. It has increased, is increasing, and God grant that it may never be diminished, but increase a thousand fold.

What says my old friend to all this? Will you also be his disciple? Methinks I hear you say, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Methodist.

‘O that the world might taste and see

‘The riches of his grace!

‘The arms of love that compass me,

‘Would all mankind embrace

‘O that my Jesu’s heavenly charms

‘Might every bosom move!

Fly, sinners, fly into the arms
Of everlasting love.

I am,

Dear friend,

Yours.

LETTER XXV.

'The weary and burthen'd, the reprobate race ;
'All wait to be pardon'd, thro' Jesus's grace.
'In Jesu's compassion the sick find a cure :
'And gospel salvation is preach'd to the poor.'

DEAR FRIEND,

HAVING those serious views of sacred subjects, I was more than ever desirous that the poor ignorant, thoughtless people in my neighbourhood should be awakened and made sensible of their dreadful state ; but how to effect this I was at a loss : for in giving away the religious tracts, I found that some of the farmers and their children, and also three-fourths of the poor, could not read ; that some of the farmers hated the clergy on the score of tythes ; so that some of those that now and then went to church were not likely to receive benefit from those they hated. Others of them would neither go to church themselves, nor let their families go. Many of the poor also lived in the total neglect of all public worship ; and spent the sabbath, some in ale-houses, others at pitch-and-toss, fives, and other

games ; some in gossiping near each other's cottages, sometimes quarrelling, generally cursing, swearing, talking obscenely, &c. others employed that day in going from one farmer to another to look at and take jobs of work.

Such as do go to church, the service being but once in the day, spend the other part of the day in the manner mentioned above. Nor do the farmers in general observe the sabbath any better than the poor ; their time is often taken up in shewing their cattle, sheep, hogs, &c. to butchers ; in letting jobs of work ; in viewing the work that has been done in the week, or in pointing out what is to be done the week ensuing ; in visiting each other, and making merry, &c. Our church-yard is called the market. Here, before and after the service, they talk over the prices that their goods sold for in the week past, and what they intend to sell for the next week.

I was also affected to see the children of the poor brought up in ignorance and vice. About four years since, I and a few of my neighbours began a Sunday and day school, yet we found that some could not be prevailed upon to send their children to it, and the few that do come, are so corrupted by the wicked examples which are set them by their parents, and other children, that very little good is to be expected from that quarter.

After much serious reflection on this general disregard of religion, and moral depravity, I resolved, if possible, to get some of Mr. Wesley's preachers to come and preach to them. After having been separated from them between thirty

and forty years, and having laughed at and ridiculed them, you may suppose that my feelings on this occasion were not very pleasant; but I knew that they had learned of their divine Master to return good for evil, and that they also went about doing good and made it the grand business of their lives to warn sinners to fly from the wrath to come; so that at last I went to Thornbury, and found out a gentleman who is a member of their small society there, and desired that the next preacher that came there would do me the favour of calling on me. On Saturday the 1st of October, 1803, Mr. Ward, one of the preachers in the Dursley circuit, paid me a visit. To this excellent young man I communicated my concern for the stupid, poor unhappy wretches around me; and although he had to preach three times the next day, at nine in the morning and at half past five in the evening at Thornbury, and at Elberton, three or four miles from Thornbury, at two; and although his health is so much impaired by preaching, that it was lately thought that he never would be able to preach more; yet this kind-hearted young man cheerfully agreed to, and did preach on a Common called Alveston Down, a quarter of a mile from my house, at eleven o'clock, to about sixty or seventy people, small and great. All were still and attentive. Mrs. L. conversed with some of them afterwards, who expressed thankfulness for having heard a sermon that they could understand, as they said that they could not understand the sermons at church, because there were so many fine words in them. Blessed be God the poor have the gospel preached unto them, in a

way that they can understand, in a thousand places in England. And here also, I cannot help remarking, that even while I was an infidel, I often regretted that the clergy did not adapt their discourses to the capacities of their hearers; as I have found that many of the farmers, and most of the poor, know very little of what they have ever heard preached in most of their parish churches. I am very confident that not one tenth part of country congregations are able to understand what they hear preached. What a pity it is, that the clergy, particularly such as live in the country, do not, in their compositions, imitate the fine, plain language of the common prayer-book. But to return from this digression.

That I should again hear a Methodist preacher under a hedge, was matter of surprise; but what was much more surprising, the preacher gave notice that there would be preaching in my house on the evening of the Friday se'n night following. This affair has been, and is still, the subject of conversation for many miles around. Letters to various parts of England and Wales have spread this extraordinary news nearly through the kingdom. Perhaps you will be a little surprised when I inform you, that Mrs. L. on the evening before, went about three miles round part of the parish, calling at every cottage in her way, to inform them that a sermon would be preached on the Down the next morning. With this information the poor people were much pleased, and promised her to be there. Mrs. L. also attended the sermon. It was the first time she ever heard preaching out of a church. She was, however, much

pleased to hear such an excellent discourse, and one so well adapted to the understandings of the hearers. Mr. Ward, the preacher, is not quite three and twenty years of age, and if he continues to preach as much as he has done for three years past, I fear that he will not live to be much older. But he is so zealous in his Master's cause, so intent on bringing poor lost sinners to Christ, that he cares but little about his body. He is one of Madeley, where Mr. Fletcher was vicar; and although he was not converted under his preaching yet he appears to partake much of the same spirit that actuated that extraordinary servant of God. I also heard Mr. Ward that day at nine o'clock in the morning, and at half past five in the evening, in Mr. Wesley's chapel in Thornbury. All his sermons were excellent, and I found it *worshiped to be there.*

I believe we should have had a much larger congregation on the Down, had not about five hundred volunteers been at that time exercising about half a mile from where Mr. Ward preached.

To break the Sabbath seems to be a wrong way to conquer our enemies. Our churches are nearly empty at those times; as the people of all descriptions are drawn to the place of exercise. There cakes, gingerbread, &c. are hawked about for sale; so that it appears more like a fair day, than the Lord's day.

I am,

Dear friend, Your's.

LETTER XXVI.

Vain Man ! thy wisdom folly own,
Lost is thy reason's feeble ray.

NOTWITHSTANDING all that I have said against the Methodists in the Memoirs of my Life; an impartial observer may see, even from my own account, that those people were of very great benefit to me. The very great alteration which took place in my life after I first heard them preach, must have been remarked. Before that time, I was a thoughtless, careless, wicked boy: from that hour I was totally changed. I then was anxious to learn to read, and it was not long before I constantly read ten chapters in the bible every day. I also read and learned hymns, and religious tracts. For about five years I lived a very religious life; but through inexperience, I was overcome and carried away by the dissipated scenes of a contested election. After having lived a year in vice, by only once hearing Mr. Wesley preach, I was effectually prevailed upon to renounce my sinful practices, and was enabled to live in the fear of God. About two years after, I married a very pious woman of Mr. Wesley's society; and in the midst of great affliction, which involved us in great poverty also, I was not only contented, but frequently experienced such a happiness in my mind, as often rose even to raptures. We had been married only about four years, when this excellent woman died, in

the full assurance of hope.—Although during my wife's illness and death, I lay in a state that was thought to be past recovery, yet even in this situation I was so happy as even to astonish some who visited me.

The readers of my Life may also recollect, that the Methodists visited me and my wife during this great affliction: and, my business being at a stand, (in consequence of my having no one to attend to my customers), they lent me money to defray the expences incurred during my long illness, and locked up my shop, to prevent me from being plundered of all I had. I might also mention many other favours that I received from them, which made me say in my Life, that they were "in general a friendly, honest-hearted, sincere people."

I perhaps ought also to observe, that if I had never heard the Methodists preach, in all probability I should have been at this time a poor, ragged, dirty cobbler, peeping out from under a bulk with a snuffy nose and a long beard; for it was by their preaching that I was taught to call upon God for his grace to enable me to turn from my vicious course of life, and through which I became a real christian. It was by their means also, that I was excited to improve a little my intellectual faculties. It was through them that I got an amiable helpmate in my first wife: and she likewise will have reason to all eternity to remember the Methodists with gratitude, for having been the instruments of her conversion; for before she heard them preach, she had not even the form

of godliness, much less the power of it. It was also through them that I got the shop in which I first set up for a bookseller. It is very likely, that had I never heard these people, I should have been now an old drunken, debauched fellow, like the generality of journeymen shoemakers; and it is well known, that many, very many instances of the same kind might be adduced; great numbers by being connected with them have learned to be industrious and frugal, by which means they have been enabled to live in credit, to provide something for their children, and to support themselves in their old age.

In my Memoirs, although I have acknowledged that there are many sensible people among the Methodists, yet I have represented many of them as very ignorant. The reason why I thought and represented them as such, is very evident; the more any people are influenced by religion; the more do they live as *strangers and pilgrims upon the earth*, the more they have respect to the recompence of reward, the more do they see him that is invisible. The more they possess of the life of God in the soul, the greater is their confidence in the providence of God over their temporal concerns. In proportion as they thus live and act, the more ignorant do they appear to the world in general; and to infidels in particular. So that in fact, the more any persons increase in the filial fear of the Lord, which, if Solomon was a judge, is real wisdom, the more they increase in that wisdom which is from above; the more they are taught of God, the more ignorant and foolish do they appear to infidels and men of the world,

who in their generation are wiser than the children of light.

That many ignorant people have from the beginning to the present time, joined the Methodists, has never been denied. *I thank thee, O Father, saith Christ, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes, even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* You see, saith St. Paul, your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men (philosophers) after the flesh; not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world. The preaching of the doctrines of the cross for the reformation and salvation of mankind, was from the beginning thought to be foolishness to the philosophers and moral declaimers. *Where is the wise?* or the philosophers that read lectures of morality? *Where is the scribe?* he that all his life has studied the Mosaic law? *Where is the disputer of this world?* the searcher into the secrets of nature? Hath not God shewn that all their wisdom is foolishness and ineffectual in the important work of reforming mankind? May it not be with truth asserted, that honest John Nelson*, the Methodist preacher, did, by preaching Christ crucified, reform more hardened sinners, than were ever reformed by all the moral lectures that were ever read to mankind? In St. Paul's days the wise were confounded on seeing the wonderful effects that were produced by the preaching of a few plain men, whom they termed fools, because they wanted the learning of the age. Mr. Wesley says,

* See John Nelson's Journal.

So wretched and obscure,
 The men whom ye despise,
 So foolish, impotent and poor,
 Above your scorn we rise.
 We through the Holy Ghost,
 Can witness better things,
 For he whose blood is all our boast,
 Hath made us priests and kings.

That Mr. Wesley's people are a comparatively ignorant people, I am fully convinced is not true; that the reverse is the fact may be easily shewn. I will begin with the preachers, I suppose all must admit that Mr. Wesley was a sensible, learned man. His brother Charles also possessed considerable abilities, and was likewise a learned man. Some of their preachers are also learned men; others of them have great natural abilities; and if we take the whole body of preachers together, they will be found to be well versed in the theory as well as the practical part of christianity, as revealed in the New Testament. And although there is reason to believe, from the effects produced by their preaching, that they are assisted by the Spirit of God, yet they also know that it is their duty to read and study; and this duty Mr. Wesley strongly enforced and insisted upon, when he met them in their Conferences, as appears by the minutes of these Conferences. And as those preachers have experienced the power of religion, and live under its influence, it must be allowed, that they are far better qualified to preach the gospel than some others who take upon them that sacred office. If you are desirous to see more on the subject of laymen preaching, read Mr. Wesley's Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part 3d. and his exhort-

lent sermon on *Heb. v. 4.* *And no man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.* In those tracts he has clearly proved, that the Jews, the primitive church, the church of England, and other churches, allowed men to preach that were not priests, nor in holy orders.

But to return. As to the members in general of the Methodist Society, I never saw any better informed in religious matters. They are better acquainted with the bible, and with the nature and design of christianity, than any people I know. The comparison is particularly striking among the poorer sort. In those parts of the kingdom where Methodism has long been established, you will find that the poorest Methodist is able to give you a rational and scriptural account of the effects of the grace of God on the soul; is well acquainted with the nature of the threatenings and promises contained in the word of God, and knows what he has to hope and fear. I think it is Addison who observes, that religion has a very great tendency to enlarge the intellectual faculties of man: as the Methodists do not waste their time in idleness and diversions, they have more time to read than others; they also hear many sermons preached by men of various talents amongst themselves; and many of them strictly attend the service at church; they also associate, converse with, and improve one another. So that the difference in degree of knowledge between the poor Methodists and the poor in general, is very remarkable. Mr. Addison justly remarks, that "The most illiterate man who is

touched with devotion, and uses frequent exercises of it, contracts a certain greatness of mind, mingled with a noble simplicity, that raises him above those of the same condition ; and there is an indelible mark of goodness in those who sincerely possess it. It is hardly possible it should be otherwise ; for the fervours of a pious mind will naturally contract such an earnestness and attention towards a better Being, as will make the ordinary passages of life go off with a becoming indifference. By this a man in the lowest condition will not appear mean."—But to a *carnal* mind their knowledge of the things of God appears to be *foolishness*, and the greatest realities are thought to be only whims. Spiritual things can only be discerned by one that is spiritually minded.

‘ The things unknown to feeble sense,
Unseen by reason’s glimmering ray,
With strong commanding evidence,
Their heavenly origin display.

‘ Faith lends his realizing light,
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly ;
Th’ Invisible appears in sight,
And God is seen by mortal eye.’

I am,

Dear Friend,

Your’s.

LETTER XXVII:

' Ah, Lord, with trembling I confess,
A gracious soul may fall from grace!
The salt may lose its seasoning power,
And never, never find it more.

' Lest that my fearful case should be,
Each moment knit my soul to thee :
And lead me to the mount above,
Thro' the low vale of humble love.'

DEAR FRIEND,

WHEN I look into my Memoirs, I shudder to see what I have done. I have wantonly treated of, and sported with the most solemn and precious truths of the gospel. O God, lay not this sin to my charge ! Other infidels have obscured, as much as they were able, the external evidences of Christianity ; but I made a thrust at its vital part. There are many thousands who never had time or opportunity, or who have been, somehow or other, prevented from investigating the external evidences of the Christian religion, who yet are as much assured of its divine authority as they are of their own existence. They know that *Christ is come in the flesh ; that they are born of God ; that they are passed from death unto life ; that they were once blind, that now they see ; that old things are done away, and all things are become new ; that they were once miserable, but are now happy ; they once were without God in the world, but now by that faith which is the operation of God, the substance of things hoped for,*

the evidence of things not seen, by this precious faith, they can say my Father and my God. They can call Christ Lord by the Holy Ghost. They know what is the communion of saints, and often sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and are filled with the fulness of God ; and they know that when this earthly tabernacle is dissolved, they have a building, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

It was this internal evidence which made the martyrs triumph in the midst of the flames ; and this evidence, neither the pretended friends, nor the open enemies of christianity, will ever be able to destroy. Christianity, without this, is a body without a soul. And all those who endeavour to invalidate this internal evidence, are blind, knowing nothing ; are false spies that bring an evil report of the good land ; they are in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity, and have neither part nor lot in the matter ; and, sooner or later, they will be found to be fighters against God.

Jesus vouchsafe a pitying ray,
Be thou my Guide, be thou my way,
To glorious happiness !
Ah ! write the pardon on my heart,
And whensoever I hence depart,
Let me depart in peace.

I suppose you are ready to ask, how it was possible for me, who once was enlightened, and had tasted the good word of God, and the power of the world to come ; how was it possible for me to sink into ignorance, blindness and infidelity. Ah, my friend, nothing is more easy. As a rea

christian is one that has been *called out of darkness into marvellous light* ; so, as long as *his eye is single, his soul is full of light, and he walks in the light, as God is in the light, and in him is no darkness at all* ; yet, if he turn back again into Egypt, he will again be involved in Egyptian darkness. The sun of righteousness will no longer shine upon him. Adam, as soon as he disobeyed his God, at once lost his favour and likeness, and sunk into a state of darkness and ignorance, and attempted to hide himself from the all-seeing eye among the trees. And when a renewed soul falls again to a course of sin, he is at last *smitten with blindness, and he gropes but cannot find the door. The candle of the Lord no more shines upon his head. They are blind, and cannot see afar off ; and have forgot that they were purged from their sins. They will curse, and swear that they know not the man. As they did not like to retain the knowledge of God, he gives them over to blindness and hardness of heart. They have quenched the Spirit, and done despite unto it. They no longer know the things which belong to their peace, they being hid from their eyes. They have eyes that see not, and ears that hear not.*

This evidence I have attempted to invalidate. God be merciful to me a sinner !

Jesus, let thy pitying eye
Call back a wandering sheep ;
False to thee, like Peter, I
Would fain like Peter weep.

Let me be by grace restor'd :
On me be all long-suffering shewn,

Turn, and look upon me, Lord,
And break my heart of stone.

I have, in my 'Life,' said that the Methodists have driven people out of their mind, made them commit suicide, &c. But I solemnly declare that *I never knew an instance of the kind from my own personal knowledge.* I have seen it asserted in pamphlets wrote against them, and also in newspapers, and I have been told that such things have happened; and upon such kind of evidence I have shamefully followed others in relating those stories after them.

In finding fault with the Methodist preachers for endeavouring to awaken all such as were never converted, every one may see that in blaming them I also blamed the prophets, Christ and his apostles, and also the church of England, and most other reformed churches. The Methodist preachers often tell their hearers, in the words of our church, in her 9th article, *That every man is far gone from original righteousness; is of his own nature inclined to evil so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and therefore every person born into the world deserveth God's wrath and damnation:* What the Methodists mean by conviction for sin, is the same as our church has set down in the communion service: *We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry, for these our misdoings, the remembrance of them is grievous unto us: and the burthen is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; for thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past; and grant that we may ever*

heréafter serve and please thee in newness of life. That which displeases the infidels and pretended christians on this head is, the Methodists insist on the necessity of *feeling* what we repeat, lest we be found solemn mockers of God.

In the scripture this conviction is called, being pricked to the heart, under which sinners are constrained to inquire, *What shall we do to be saved ? To cry, God be merciful to me a sinner, &c.* And under this conviction David roared *for the disquietude of his soul, and watered his bed with his tears.* Jeremiah saith, *Be not a terror to me.* In another place, God says, *I will make thee a terror to thyself.* Solomon says, *The spirit of a man may sustain his (bodily) infirmities ; but a wounded spirit who can bear.* This is what is intended by a *contrite spirit, a broken heart, &c.*

So that what I have pointed out as a dreadful state is, I presume, quite scriptural ; and must be more or less felt by every person before he will see the necessity of coming to Christ for pardon and *salvation* ; before *he can be born again, or converted* ; or before he can be justified, as St. Paul says, and as our church says also, before he *ever can be changed by the inspiration of his holy Spirit ; before he can perfectly love God, or worthily magnify his holy name.*

But as an infidel I cared for none of these things, and so ridiculed them all. The remembrance of which has in *reality* been to me grievous, and the burthen intolerable ! May Almighty God make all the inventors, and other wanton re-

lators of such stories, feel, before it is too late, the same sorrow and sincere repentance! and may they also obtain mercy through the all-atoning blood of Christ, who forgiveth *all manner of sins and blasphemies* of such as truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel.

‘ After all that I have done,
Saviour, art thou pacify’d ?
Whither shall my vileness run ?
Hide me, earth, the sinner hide !
Let me sink into the dust,
Full of holy shame adore !
Jesus Christ, the good, the just,
Bids me go and sin no more.

‘ O, confirm the gracious word,
Jesus, Son of God and Man !
Let me never grieve thee, Lord,
Never turn to sin again !
Till my all in all thou art !
Till thou bring thy nature in,
Keep this feeble, trembling heart,
Save me, save me, Lord, from sin !’

I am,

Dear friend,

Yours,

LETTER XXVIII.

‘ Let us join, (’tis God commands,)
 Let us join our hearts and hands :
 Help to gain our calling’s hope,
 Build we each the other up.’

DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE represented some of the Methodists as troublesome obtruders on the sick and dying ; so that I think I ought to set this matter in a clear light.

Mr. Wesley’s people think that they cannot *love their neighbour as themselves*, without endeavouring to find out every possible way by which they may be serviceable to the souls and bodies of their fellow creatures. In London and Bristol, and I believe in other places, some of their society who are able to pray, instruct, and exhort, endeavour to find out poor distressed objects who are confined to their beds by diseases in poor-houses, prisons, lodging houses, dirty lanes, alleys, &c. Those poor forsaken outcasts of society they instruct, exhort, pray with, &c. To objects most in want they give money. Perhaps there cannot be any labour of love more praiseworthy, or more deserving of encouragement, as great numbers of such poor destitute wretches may at all times be found languishing in a forlorn state, and generally die without any one caring any thing about them : for none but such as are filled with the love of God and man will ever go into such loathsome places

and habitations. I formerly accompanied some of those loving people in this work of mercy, and have witnessed their cheerful performance of this great duty ; which to a poor, selfish, unregenerate heart would be intolerable. But no labour, however disagreeable or hazardous to health or life, is too much to be performed by such as are thoroughly impressed with the worth of an immortal soul ; who are persuaded that *Christ tasted death for every man*, and would that every man should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. While they were employed in this solemn work, if they could discover any poor creature that gave them reason to hope for his conversion, O, what love and joy warmed every heart ! The devil knew that *Job did not serve God for naught*. Christ still pays his servants well for every thing they do in his name and for his sake. Those people, when employed in such work as this, which to flesh and blood is not only irksome but shocking, yet would not have exchanged the pleasure which they found in it for any earthly enjoyment. To return to the subject.

It is not only in cities and large towns that the poor die unvisited ; but also in many country towns, villages, &c. In the places where I have lived in the former part of my life, and where I have had a country-house, or in the various villages round my present residence, I do not recollect any poor person who had sent for a clergyman on such an occasion, or of any clergyman that went unsent for. Those poor creatures ge-

literally die as stupid and careless as they have lived. When any one of them has any concern about his immortal part, he is afraid to give trouble to the vicar or curate, and ashamed to let them witness his poverty and rags. Christ well knew the deplorable state of such poor creatures, and has graciously promised to reward all such as explore their dreary abodes. But as an infidel, I thought all talk about heaven and hell, praying for them, &c. useless and terrifying; for which reason I exclaimed against such as performed those kind offices. And I recollect that when, about twenty years since, I was thought to be near death, I was so hardened as not to suffer any clergyman to come near me, or any other religious person.

Weary of wandering from my God,
And now made willing to return,
I hear, and bow me to the rod;
For thee, not without hope, I mourn:
I have an advocate above,
A friend before the throne of love.

O, Jesus, full of truth and grace,
More full of grace than I of sin
Yet once again I seek thy face,
Open thy arms and take me in:
And freely my backslidings heal,
And love the faithless sinner still.

That an avowed unbeliever should refuse to accept any spiritual advice, and not suffer any prayers to be put up for him when about to quit the world is not very surprising. But I am persuaded that there have been, and still are, very many

who call themselves christians, who when thought to be on the borders of the invisible world, would not have one word said to them of their real state, much less would they bear any religious advice, or join in prayer. And yet perhaps those very people were such as put off repentance to a sick or death-bed, not considering that the longer they continue in sin the more callous they are made, and that the consciences of many are at last *scared* as it were *with a hot iron*.

‘Dead already, dead within,
Spiritually dead in sin;
Dead to God while here they breathe,
Panting after second death,
They will still in sin remain,
Greedy of eternal pain.’

You no doubt recollect that I have also ridiculed the private meetings established by Mr. Wesley among his people. Nor is it at all surprising that a freethinker should hate every means of grace, particularly such as have so great a tendency to keep the children of God together, and to promote all inward and outward holiness. I will transcribe Mr. Wesley’s account of the origin of his classes in London, March 1742. “I appointed, (says Mr. Wesley) several earnest, sensible men to meet me, to whom I shewed the great difficulty I had long found of knowing the people who desired to be under my care. After much discourse, they all agreed there could be no better way to come to a sure knowledge of each person, than to divide them into classes, un-

der the inspection of those in whom I could confide. This was the origin of classes in London, for which I can never sufficiently praise God, the unspeakable usefulness of the institution having ever since been more and more manifest." The person appointed to watch these little classes was called the *leader* of that class to which he received his appointment. Mr. *Wesley* called the *leaders* together, and desired that each would make a particular inquiry into the behaviour of those he saw weekly. They did so; and many disorderly walkers were detected. Some were turned from the evil of their ways, and some put out of the society. And the rest saw it with fear, and rejoiced in God with reverence. At first the *leaders* visited each person at their own house; but this was soon found inexpedient. It required more time than the leaders had to spare. Many persons lived with masters, mistresses, or relations, where they could not be visited. And where misunderstandings had arisen between persons in the same class, it was more convenient to see them face to face. On these, and some other considerations, it was agreed, that each leader should meet his class altogether, once a week, at a time and place most convenient for the whole. He begun and ended the meeting with singing and prayer; and spent about an hour conversing with these persons, one by one. By this means, a more full inquiry was made into the behaviour of every person; advice or reproof was given as need required; misunderstandings were removed, and

Brotherly love promoted. "It can scarce be conceived (says Mr. Wesley,) what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many experienced, that christian fellowship, of which they had not so much as an idea before. They begun to *bear one another's burthens*, and *naturally to care for each other's welfare*. And as they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for each other." Mr. Wesley further adds; "Upon reflection I could not but observe, this is the very thing which was from the very beginning of christianity. In the earliest times, those whom God had sent forth to *preach the gospel to every creature*, and the body of *hearers* were mostly Jews or Heathens; but as soon as any of these were so convinced of the truth as to forsake sin, and seek the gospel of salvation, they immediately joined them together, took an account of their names, and advised them to watch over each other, and met those *Catechumens*, as they were then called, apart from the congregation, that they might instruct, rebuke, exhort, and pray with them and for them, according to their several necessities."

Perhaps the following hymn, which they often sing in those meetings, will enable you to form some idea of the temper and spirit by which they are actuated.

Christ, from whom all blessings flow,
 Perfecting the saints below,
 Hear us, who thy nature share,
 Who thy mystic body are;
 Join us, in one spirit join,
 Let us still receive of thine:

Still for more on thee we call,
Thou who fillest all in all !

Closer knit to thee our head,
Nourish us, O Christ, and feed ;
Let us daily growth receive,
More and more in Jesus live.
Jesus, we thy members are,
Cherish us with kindest care ;
Of thy flesh and of thy bone,
Love, for ever love thy own.

Move and actuate, and guide,
Divers gifts to each divide ;
Plac'd according to thy will,
Let us all our work fulfil,
Never from our office move,
Needful to each other prove ;
Use the grace on each bestow'd,
Temper'd by the art of God.

Sweetly may we all agree,
Touch'd with softest sympathy ;
Kindly for each other care,
Every member feel its share,
Wounded by the grief of one,
Now let all the members groan ;
Honour'd if one member is,
All partake the common bliss.

Many are we now and one,
We who Jesus have put on :
There is neither bond or free,
Male or female, Lord, in thee !
Love, like death, has all destroy'd,
Render'd all distinction void !
Names and sects and parties fall !
Thou, O Christ, art all in all !

I am, dear friend,

Your's.

END.

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